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## PREDICTORS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM USAGE WITHIN UNITED STATES PRISONS

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Predictors of Educational Program Usage within United States Corrections

By

Grant Tietjen

A THESIS

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Predictors of Educational Program Usage within United States Corrections

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This study investigates factors that predict inmate participation in prison educational programs using the Bureau of Justice (BJS) 2004 Survey of State and Federal Inmates. Several theories are discussed including controlology, Marxist criminological theory, critical education theory, as well as Opportunity Theory and theories of sub-culture and Prisonization. I examine predictors of prison educational program usage. Analyses indicate that the longer an inmate's sentence is, the more likely the inmate is to use correctional education programs, being married and having children was not found to significantly affect prison education program usage, and inmates with higher SES upon entry were less likely to utilize educational programs. Other interesting findings, while not included in the hypotheses were race and age. It also appears that non-white inmates are more likely to utilize GED/High school programs possibly because of lower median levels of previous education upon entry. Also, older inmates were less likely to utilize educational programs within prison. I argue that educational programs should be designed which target inmates who are less likely to participate and explore theoretical explanations for educational program usage.

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## PREDICTORS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM USAGE WITHIN UNITED STATES PRISONS

### INTRODUCTION

This study investigates factors that predict male inmate participation in prison educational programs using the Bureau of Justice (BJS) 2004 Survey of State and Federal Inmates to examine varieties of education used by prison inmates. Initially, I provide a critique of the United States prison system referring to the work of Foucault. Critical education theory is then discussed, examining the works of Paulo Freire and his writings on how the oppressed can benefit from liberatory education. My paper will then progress on to a discussion of overcoming stigma and an exploration of the literature surrounding correctional education, looking at models of corrections and correctional education, and the inmate's experiences within the correctional system.

For this research, potential predictors of educational program participation are ethnicity, age, children, marital status, class, prior education, sentence length, and type of crime. Using Opportunity Theory (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960) and Clemmer's (1940) writings on Prisonization as a theoretical basis, I hypothesize that people who have higher socio-economic status (SES), lower levels of pre-incarceration education, longer sentence lengths, who are currently married, inmates who have children, and less-serious (i.e., non-violent, and/or white-collar crimes) crimes are more likely to participate in prison educational programs while incarcerated. Those with lower pre-incarceration monthly income, lower levels of pre-incarceration education, and more serious crime (ie: violent, non-white collar, and many street crimes) are less likely to utilize prison educational

programs while incarcerated. Using regression analysis, I assess policy proposals that prison educational programs should be designed to target inmates who are less likely to participate.

## CRITIQUE OF PRISON SYSTEM

This study focuses on the theories of Michel Foucault (1977) and Marxist criminological theory to address criminological aspects and the work of Paulo Freire (1992) to frame its educational aspects. Foucault provides an assessment of education and punishment. He believed that over the course of history, punishment changed from a focus on the body of the prisoner/inmate to the soul of the inmate. He writes that the prisoner internalizes the experience of punishment. Foucault's (1977) *Discipline and Punish* begins with a man being drawn and quartered by horses, after being burned severely, having hot wax poured on him, and large portions of his flesh ripped from his body, eventually being put to death for attempted regicide. He begins by examining punishment which focused on the body as with the example given above, then moves on to give a detailed historical account of how the focus of punishment changed over time.

Foucault identified the criminal justice and prison systems as forms of social control which extends far past the tangible walls that surround those inside prison walls. This concept came to be known as controlology. He argued that society was not developing more humane/civilized forms of punishment, but has instead developed more efficient forms of punishment. Modern forms of social control, he theorized, are far more sophisticated and far reaching than social control measures of the past, encompassing all facets of human existence, whether under the direct observation of the criminal justice

system or not. We as human beings literally internalize the criminal justice system's power to control within ourselves. He stated that prisons resemble other social institutions and that other social institutions (factories, schools, barracks, and hospitals) resemble prisons; thus the concept of a carceral or a prison-like society (1977: 283). Foucault would argue that modern society's prisons would have no stake in generating an educated/enlightened inmate, as this would be inefficient and cumbersome and hinder or abate the effects of punishment. The education which prisoners might receive would further the objectives of the governing power structure, and/or increase the power structure's control over the inmate.

From a broad perspective, Marxist criminological theory focuses less on criminal behavior and more on the criminal justice system and criminal law. Marx's work poses a "Criminal Justice system that is used against, rather than for the people" (Akers & Sellers: 2004). Marxist criminologists see laws, and punitive measures as unjust in nature and structured to oppress the general population. Prisons are a tool to warehouse the lumpenproletariat (the marginal classes of society) during economic depressions when unemployment rates are high. Thus, the state utilizes prisons to contain the revolutionary potential of an idle working class. According to Marxist Criminological theory, correctional education is failing to educate or rehabilitate inmates by creating instead, a sub-class of disenfranchised, poorly educated people who are ill-equipped to sustain themselves or their families (Sims 1997).

Why then does the state offer rehabilitation training or prison education programs at all? From a Marxist perspective, correctional programs are offered in order to allay societal exasperation with a system that is failing to live up to its correctional ideal. The

economic elite seeks to suppress the intellectual, creative and revolutionary potential of those under the control of the criminal justice system. By offering ineffectual and state-directed educational prison programs, they attempt to accomplish this task.

Both Marxist and Foucauldian theory recognize the existence of an economic power structure that dictates the lives of inmates, thus affecting the quality of their educational experience. Foucault was Marxist, being a member of the communist party in France, and thus their (Marx and Foucault) common thread of critiquing unequal power relations among those in control and those who are not in control must be recognized. Inmate students are particularly vulnerable to the nuances of the prison power structure, as they are under the control of a total institution (Goffman,1961). Thus, if inmates occupy an unequal position in the social power paradigm, they are more susceptible to the negative consequences of the unequal position within the confines of their respective total institution. The negative consequences of unequal power are a determining factor in whether or not the inmate attains a quality education while incarcerated or is tracked into marginalized programs that restrict and/or limit life chances upon re-entry into society, as a result of prisonization (Clemmer 1940).

## FREIREIAN EDUCATIONAL THEORY

From educational theory, the work of Paulo Freire aids in understanding predictors of inmate usage of educational programs. In Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), his ground-breaking theoretical work addresses the education of oppressed groups. The colonized and the poor of developing nation's are considered the oppressed within Freire's writings. He argued that there must be an open dialogue between those being

educated and the educators. Educators must develop a working understanding of those who are learning; from the perspective of those they are teaching, actually learning the culture, language, and heritage of the groups they are to educate. The oppressed must come to see that their lives, culture, and heritage are educational tools in and of themselves that can contribute to the educational process. Freire vehemently opposes the “banking model” of education that sees students as empty bank accounts to be filled up with knowledge by their educators. He instead supports the “problem-posing” education model that positions teachers as being students of their students, and students being teachers of their teachers. In short Freire states the idea of “teacher-students and student-teachers” (1970: 67), with learning as a reciprocal process of power and ideas. Neither party, student or teacher, takes complete possession of knowledge; each party acknowledges the knowledge and capacity to teach of the other party.

The point must be made that Freire speaks of an education of freedom, or liberation pedagogy, which may be construed as problematic in the eyes of correctional administrators. Through the process of education, according to Freire, the oppressed become liberated from the bonds of the oppressors since, “the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation” (Freire 1970: 40). When discussing this issue, Freire speaks of the oppressed being prepared to take action against their oppressors in a physical sense, yet within the confines of a correctional facility, which he ignores, this action would quickly be quashed causing more harm than benefit to the inmates involved. Any security risk is a disruption of order and discipline. Thus, the Freirian educational liberation which would occur with

corrections would take the form of mental liberation which would translate into physical forms of pro-social liberation upon the inmate's re-entry into society.

While it is stated above that the oppressed within Freire's work were commonly groups that had been historically colonized, and the poor within developing nations, I apply Freire's theory to inmates within the United States correctional system. I argue the incarcerated are in fact an oppressed and marginalized group that could benefit from Freire's pedagogical model as much as the colonized and poor of developing nations. An argument which might be raised against this position is that inmates chose the position they are in through free will and thus deserve their oppressed status. Yet, the major theoretical stances I discussed in criminological theory, argue that most inmates are not classified as criminal due to acts of self-will, but due to oppressive tactics used by more powerful segments of society. As in Marxist and Foucauldian theory, the intricate and sophisticated use of control parallels the stance taken by the educational theory section.

Western and Petit (2004) state that the majority of inmates within the United States prison system are poor and uneducated, and a disproportionate number come from ethnic minorities. These conditions are commonly associated with oppression and marginalization, both globally and within the United States. Their research also indicates the fact that law enforcement generally assigns more surveillance to the poor, uneducated, and minorities, which helps to explain their higher rates of incarceration.

Inmates within correctional institutions are also confined to what Goffman (1961:11) refers to as total institutions; in a setting in which they are separated from the rest of society, and said institutions control every aspect of their lives. Inmates are under the total control of an overarching bureaucracy which accepts little or no resistance from

those it houses. Thus, the educational programs offered within these institutions would be similar in nature. The educator would be the supreme authority, the sole owner of the knowledge that will be used to transform the prisoner from a criminal into a model citizen, totally disregarding the knowledge and lived experience of the prisoner and the insight they could add to this process.

Many contemporary scholars point to the importance of liberatory educational practices within the correctional classroom. Wright and Gehring (2008) view the development of civil and ethical dialogue with one's fellow inmates as vitally important. When correctional instructors encourage inmates to develop this skill, inmates not only learn how to respect their fellows, but also develop the skills necessary to participate in the democratic public sphere, thus allowing their voices to be heard and recognized. Cormac (2007) notes that, "If we seek to provide a counter culture to the correctional regime philosophically and psychologically tremendous results can be achieved in such a negative institution." It is important for prison educational programs, and the educators within them to recognize that critical reflection of themselves is an effective method of providing inmates with a life-changing educational experience. Correctional educators, according to Cormac (2007) should encourage inmates to practice critical reflection, which enables inmates to develop personally, and to become more effective learners. Education within this context, can assist in reducing the damage done to inmates from long term exposure to an often negative prison environment. Problem solving activities coupled with critical-thinking instructs inmates as to how to solve real-life problems, and do be able to make critical assessments and apply them to the potential life problem solutions (Boudin, 1995). While participating in literacy courses within corrections,

inmates follow a model devised by Boudin (1995) who draws on the works of Freire, in which they (inmates) listen, reflect and participate in dialogue and then participate in activities which help them to explain what they have learned and develop problem-solving skills. These works indicate that liberatory educational practices within the correctional education setting are quite effective and have the potential to change inmates lives.

Correctional systems generally do not acknowledge the liberatory educational potential of the inmate, as this would relinquish some of their authority over the inmate. Any form of autonomy is viewed as dangerous, and undermines the purpose of prison control in general. Yet, if a Freirian model of education existed within prison, engaging prisoners to own some of the educational process and engage in a dialogic process with their educators, perhaps a better quality product of correctional education would emerge. By postulating that this event could occur, the conceptualization of a liberated form of correctional education can begin to take place.

More specific theories addressing criminal learning include: moral-development theory, social-psychological development theory, and opportunity theory. Ubah and Robinson Jr. (2003) support prison education as a viable method of lowering arrest rates. Moral development theory was originally developed by Kohlberg (1973) and is described by Ubah and Robinson (2003: 116) as emphasizing the positive aspects of education within corrections. The basic premise is that if inmates were exposed to a liberal arts education, which seems to strengthen human morality, it would develop their own morality and make them higher quality and more productive (and less deviant) citizens.

Ubah and Robinson categorize this as an optimistic model that predicts who will be less likely to commit crime and consequently be re-arrested.

Social-psychological development theory looks at the development of new cognitive abilities through the experience of correctional education (Austin 1987). Austin's premise is that inmates who gain education while incarcerated develop more mature behavior patterns. They are better able to solve problems rationally, and develop more positive self-images instead of becoming disillusioned within the repressive correctional environment (Ubah and Robinson , 2003).

#### OPPORTUNITY THEORY AND CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

Opportunity theory, an elaboration of Robert Merton's (1938) anomie theory, was developed by Cloward and Ohlin (1960), based on Robert Merton's (1938) strain theory. Of the more specific theories that support prison education, opportunity theory receives the most focus within my study, and will be used to develop my hypotheses. This theory examines crime (especially street crime), stating that most crime is committed because perpetrators lack economic and social opportunity. Thus criminals feel they have no other method of survival other than committing crimes. Opportunity theory argues that if inmates are given valid educational opportunities within the prison system, that they will have a "way out" of their previous situations (poverty, lack of social capital, lack of education) and be less likely to recommit crime upon their release back into society. This theory is applicable to the inmates who I hypothesize are less likely to utilize correctional college education programs. Those who commit street crimes are generally those who come from lower socio-economic status, lower levels of education, and commit non-

white collar (non-occupational) types of crime. As Ubah and Robinson (2003) wrote, former prisoners who are in a disadvantaged social situation and are effectively disenfranchised by their felony conviction status are further barred from entering into many areas of potential employment. Yet with the added human capital of educational credentials, the life chances of the average inmate would be improved greatly, allowing them a better chance to engage in upward mobility upon release and even while in the correctional system itself. Ubah and Robinson also make reference to Hershberger (1987), who makes the point that education within prison also sets the stage for further education upon release, as the ex-inmate already has a working knowledge of the educational system and its benefits.

The theories of Marx, Foucault, and Freire all share a common linkage to Opportunity Theory, that being the lack of opportunities for social/main-stream success in some capacity for the socially disadvantaged. Each of the three theoretical paradigms frames lack of opportunity differently. Marxist (Tucker 1978:478) theory discusses lack of opportunity from an economic perspective. In the case of inmates, lack of economic resources would limit inmate's ability to attain a legitimate and useful educational experience both before their entry into prison and while serving their sentence. From the Foucauldian perspective, excessive control exists on the part of the power structure, both while in prison and before their incarceration. Foucault believes control is society wide (1977:283) and would limit or hinder the inmate's educational experience. The power structure/prison bureaucracy would focus only on education that trains, not education that liberates. Inmate autonomy hinders their attempts at increased control over their subjects (i.e. the inmates). While Marxist and Foucauldian theory view lack of opportunity as

stemming from economic and control considerations, Freire (1970) sees lack of opportunity as linked to historical processes of oppression. Prisoners have adopted the values of their oppressors, and thus do not understand freedom (1970:31). From the inmate's perspective, the society that imprisoned them and then the institution of the prison that confines inmates would serve as the oppressor. Oppression would negatively affect the inmate's educational experience while within the prison, as the education which he or she received would be under the control and guidance of the oppressive entity.

Once it has been delineated that the idea that the theories of Marx, Foucault, and Freire share the linkage of lack of opportunity in some capacity, the discussion of how these theories are connected to Opportunity Theory can begin. In order to understand this issue, Opportunity Theory must be processed in reverse. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) discuss Opportunity Theory as affecting delinquents by hindering/limiting their opportunities to engage in illegitimate avenues to societal success, so they turn to illegitimate opportunities available to them. This study will view Opportunity theory from the logical assessment that if legitimate opportunities did exist, than prisoners would be less likely to participate in illegitimate means of achieving success after release.

*Correctional Models:* Within United States prisons, the quality of education programs has been on the decline for some time due to financial and policy factors. While prisons have been built at a record pace over the last 20 years, funding for education and reform within those prisons has continued to be cut, as larger amounts of taxes have been spent

to build new prisons. The funds spent on education within prisons has decreased yearly throughout the decade of the nineties (Welsh, 2002).

In order to adequately address the issue of the factors that predict inmate participation in education, the foundational correctional models and the current conditions of correctional education are discussed. Two main schools of thought pertain to correctional administration: the rehabilitative model and the retributive model.

The rehabilitative model focuses on inmates becoming better, more productive citizens, and supports provision of life tools besides crime in order to thrive within society. This correctional philosophy emphasizes prison educational programs to give inmates the skills and knowledge to learn a trade, achieve a basic education, gain a degree, and learn basic cognitive problem solving skills. While inmates are serving a prison sentence repaying society for their crime, they are also learning how to become self sufficient citizens, able to take care of themselves and their families without the intervention and expense of the state. Brewster and Sharp (2002:329) discuss the process of normalizing as an important benefit of education within prisons. Referencing Foucault(1977/1995), they define successful normalization as successful rehabilitation that replaces “criminal” norms with those of mainstream society.

The opposing philosophy is the retributive model of corrections (also referred to as the punishment model). This model supports corrections as a method of retribution. The purpose of punishment is for inmates to “pay back” society for wrongs they have committed. Punishment is meant to be uncomfortable and painful, with the intent of generating a strong deterrent effect, to the point that inmates wish never to participate in criminal behavior again. Correctional programming within this model is viewed as

frivolous and ineffective. Because the inmates are in prison to repay their debt to society, their experience must be purely in the form of punishment. Any program or perceived luxury would be viewed as a reward or benefit and thus diminish the intensity of the punishment experience.

One component of the punishment centered model of corrections is the “just desserts” model. Cook (1980:13) discusses the ideas of the “desserts” model, a more conservative/classical model of criminal justice which explains the incarceration of criminals as a “just dessert” for commission of their crimes. Prisoners get what they deserve. They are not worthy of any type of special treatment such as education. This model references the ideas of Bentham (1789), in which criminals utilize a “hedonistic calculus,” a logical way of determining how much pleasure and pain one receives from any given act. Criminals, as stated by Cook (1980:12), “with defective self controls, etc, can be seen as less than fully rational or unable to correctly calculate the net pleasures and pains to be accrued through the criminal act.” According to Cook, the inmates are by nature incapable of distinguishing between right from wrong and they must be made an example. Nothing rehabilitative should be done to/for them. Thus, the privileges of society must be withheld from them, including education, especially higher education privileges. Any attempt to educate such women and men is considered fruitless, and also detracts from the severity of their punishment. Education as a benefit would detract from the severity of the deterrent message being sent to the general public via criminal justice channels that when one commits a criminal act, the punishment will be severe.

Incapacitation is another model of criminal justice that views incarcerated people as convicted of crimes, with little or no focus on inmates receiving an education while in the

correctional system. Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985) point out that this model, coined “selective incapacitation,” raises many moral and ethical issues. According to this model, the only way to prevent crime is to literally incapacitate those committing the crimes. Those deemed criminal by the criminal justice system must be removed from the streets and placed in prison for as long as necessary. Early models in this area suggested that criminals should be incapacitated indefinitely, and current models define how long a criminal must be incapacitated by the severity/type of crime the criminal commits. The selective incapacitation model was developed by Greenwood and Abrahamse (1982), who propose that a method could be developed to determine the potential that a criminal would commit additional crime in the future. When convicted of crimes, convicts should receive sentences based on assessment of their “risk level.” If this risk level is determined to be high, the offender should be incapacitated within the confines of a prison to prevent the crime from being repeated. While this model implies that inmates should not be mistreated and/or abused, neither should they be treated or rehabilitated by the correctional system. The correctional system should house them, but not exert any effort to improve their life chances through education or treatment of any medical/emotional issue. Any effort to do so would be considered a waste of time and resources, as they have already been classified as criminals who will commit more crime and are beyond the ability of society to change them for the better - hopeless criminals if you will. Both, this model of incarceration and the “just desserts” model would fit well with Marxist criminological model which sees prisons as nothing more than storehouses for the throw-away segment of society. No resources should be wasted on them, as they are completely useless to begin with.

*Correctional Education:* On the other hand, a large and contradictory body of literature exists on the benefits of prison education (Shrum,2004; Welsh,2002; Ubah & Robinson, 2003; Brewster & Sharpe,2002; Batchelder & Pippert,2002; Vacca,2004; Darling & Price,2004; Allen, 2004; Moeller, Day & Rivera,2004). Study after study shows the positive benefits of prison educational programs within corrections, yet legislators have responded with “get tough on crime” policies that eliminate educational opportunities for inmates (Samenow, 1984). These policies reduce funding for rehabilitative programs and eliminate individual educational programs. Public and political sentiment towards the rehabilitational model of corrections swayed to a punishment centered attitude towards corrections after Martinson (1974) published his report entitled, “*What Works.*” He examines the prison programming of the day and concludes that *some* of it does not work. Critics of prison programming quickly renamed Martinson’s report “nothing works,” and this was the primary message about it delivered through the media.

Ubah and Robinson (2003: 121), upon a closer investigation of Martinson’s work, find that his findings were not overwhelmingly against prison programming at all. Their report identifies 48% of prison programs as effective. Thus nearly half of all programs *were* working, yet instead of a large scale investigation of which programs were working and which were not, the public and politicians heard that which programs were ineffectual and that programming aimed at rehabilitation in and of itself was a complete failure. This raises an important contradiction: the effectiveness of prison educational programs which the research would seem to support versus the punitive politics of the era. Sykes (1978) explains that when the prison system is seen as an instrument of

oppression, and reducing educational opportunity within the majority of United States prisons could be interpreted as oppressive, then, “the idea of imprisonment escapes the bounds of criminology and becomes an issue for political debate” (Sykes 1978:539 ). Sykes is emphasizing the idea that issues surrounding corrections, because of their sensitive and controversial nature, are often decided by political debate, while academic/scholarly findings are disregarded.

With the reorientation of public policy toward a punishment model of corrections came the eventual passage of the Omnibus Crime bill and the elimination of Pell Grants to Inmates for college education under the Clinton Administration in 1994. The rationale behind this bill was that Pell grants going to inmate students were taking away from potential funds that should go to non-incarcerated students, thus taking chances for education away from potential students who were “law abiding.” The results of the Omnibus Bill were that non-incarcerated students gained an additional \$4.25 per semester with the elimination of Pell Grants to inmate students, a questionable gain at best. Welsh (2002) states that, “In a 1997 survey conducted by the Corrections Compendium, “ 66% of the reporting correctional systems indicated that the elimination of Pell Grants eliminated most, if not all of their college course opportunities for inmates” (p5). Welsh (2002) concludes that the Pell Grant is unlikely to be restored to inmates. Thus, correctional systems have attempted to find alternative sources of funding. Ubah and Robinson (2003) discuss a study (Tewksbury & Taylor, 1996) which points to the only current sources of educational funding for inmates as being: “federal Perkins funds, private foundation grants, private funds ( their own or those of family members), and state-based educational grants” (2003:125). These sources of funding have never been

able to fully cover the elimination of financial resources previously made available to inmates through Pell Grants.

The idea that education, especially prison educational programs, is a panacea as a means of reducing criminality or that it will immediately solve all the issues facing inmates while in prison and upon re-entry into society is certainly not being made in this study. The issue is much larger than this, as Sykes (1978) explains when he points out that it takes years for inmates lives to get to the point they are at when they enter prison, and it will also take years to improve their situation. Yet, education is an excellent place to begin to address improving inmates' life chances.

There are several different types of educational programs within correctional institutions. Wade (2007) points out four main categories: Adult Basic Education (also known as ABE)/ Kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade, General Educational Development (GED), vocational, and post-secondary education in the form of college courses. These are the types of programs that this paper focused on.

ABE/Kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade teaches students the remedial educational skills that many inmates lack upon entry into prison. Thus, ABE's job is to make up for deficiencies in basic areas of learning, completion of which can lead to the next level of educational programming, the GED. The GED can substitute for a high school diploma, which is required for advancement to the next levels of education and for the fulfillment of basic requirements of educational attainment within many job fields and training programs.

Vocational programming involves training inmates in a certain job area, such as welding, carpentry, plumbing, or computer skills, to name a few. These are often non-

academic fields which involve the performance of manual labor, including maintenance of prison facilities.

A final category of prison educational programming is post-secondary education/college programs. These programs offer college classes to inmates in academic areas of study, and inmates can receive a college degree while incarcerated if they successfully complete their course of study.

My study will focus on all the components of prison education discussed above. I will examine post-secondary education more closely than the others because of the decline of post-secondary education within United States prisons. The politicization of funds for this service resulted in funds being cut and/or eliminated since the 1990's, and shifts in societal/political opinions on the effectiveness of prison programming overall. Knepper (1989) shows that college education is *more* effective at helping inmates adjust to society upon release from prison, and can lower recidivism rates while increasing good behavior within prisons (Gaes et. al;1999).

*The Inmate:* Previous research often overlooks one very important source of information on prisons and education; the actual ex-convict. Their unique experience and insight will now be discussed. Convict criminologists are a modern group of scholars and academics who all have one characteristic in common: they are all ex-convicts. Members of this group include John Irwin, a professor emeritus at San Francisco University and ex-convict, cited in the work of Sims which is noted in the *Class Inequality and Conflict* section of this paper. Jeffrey Ian Ross is co-author of *Convict Criminology*, a book that explains the effect of crime myths on corrections (2003: 41). Ross discusses how myths about corrections keep adequate and necessary policy changes from being made. While

beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that myths about corrections potentially support the arguments of the Marxist idea of a “false consciousness” held by the public. This keeps them from addressing the true issues of inequality surrounding the prison system. Many of these myths held by the public focus on rare, isolated, and “worst case” events that occur in prison, without looking at the internal structure of everyday prison life and the flaws and expansion of the institution itself. Ross states that “powerful groups with vested interests,” including private businesses and private prisons are the “perpetuators” of these myths. Elrod and Brooks (2000) take an in-depth look at youths under the age of 18 in the prison system and at the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in “rehabilitating” young people. The authors discuss a study they conducted in a youth correctional facility (Elrod and Brooks: 2000). After talking with many of the young people and to the prison staff/administration, they discovered a divergence of opinions between staff and inmates. The administration viewed the facility as a very positive and progressive environment, while the youth viewed their situation in the facility as “hopeless.” One inmate made the statement that “you ain’t really learning nothing productive, just how to do time.” The authors were also concerned with fact that the young prisoners were being indoctrinated with the ideas and mentalities which would serve to increase their potential for recidivism. Thus, their chances of living a successful and normal life have been diminished due to their experience with incarceration. The inmates interviewed received no or very little worthwhile programming while incarcerated. They simply sat around and did nothing, and were then released back into society with the label of felon, no worthwhile job skills or talents, and no economic resources or legitimate means to create economic resources. In contrast, Moeller, et. al.

(2004) found that students involved in correction education, viewed education as having a strong influence on improving their life chances.

Vacca (2004) examined the positive effects that education has on inmates, which is the basis for educating inmates in general. While this statement rings of tautology, without positive effects from education, these programs would have no reason to exist. Examining reasons why education is important to inmates and what components a strong educational program in corrections would involve, Vacca (2004), makes the statement that programs are needed which help inmates “promote a positive transition to society when they are released.” As to reasons why prison education should appeal to policy makers and politicians, Vacca (2004) makes the point that when prisoners receive an education, they are less likely to return to prison. An example is the program at Skidmore College in New York, “University without Walls,” in which most of the participants did not return to prison and “hundreds of millions of dollars per year” were saved. From a fiscal perspective this benefits a society already heavily economically burdened with other issues. Thus, the common voter, “Joe/Jills Six-Packs” should be provided with a commonsensical alternative to the ideas contained in the retributive or punishment model. If Joe Six-Pack or Joe-the-plummer knew the facts, he would be more likely to support a rehabilitative model based on education. Similarly, leaders who are afraid of committing to a weak-on-crime/coddling criminals stance, would be more apt to support such programs and provide the necessary funding to make these programs possible. Stevens and Ward (1997) state that it is less expensive to educate prisoners than it is to reincarcerate them. They also point out that we as a nation should seek to lower

rates of incarceration overall through educational programs within the prison system itself, based on findings that educated prisoners have lower rates of recidivism.

Vacca (2004:301) examined the educational characteristics of inmates who were currently utilizing prison educational programs, referencing a study by Stephens (1992) of a maximum security prison in New York, found very little literature on the overall traits of inmates who are apt to use prison educational programs exists. Characteristics of inmates utilizing educational programming has been neglected and not well-documented, thus my study seeks to address this issue. Stephens' study found that 79% of inmates within the prison he studied were high school dropouts, and most of the inmates "blamed poor socioeconomic conditions and poor role models as major reasons for dropping out of school and for their criminal activity." (Vacca 2004:301) The educational programming being discussed within Stephens' study is remedial in nature, oriented toward teaching inmates basic skills needed to function in everyday society, and a large proportion of the inmates came in at below average levels of education and schooling.

## HYPOTHESES

This study intends to explore demographic and social characteristics of inmates and the likelihood that they will use prison educational programs within the prison system. I use Opportunity Theory, as a foundation to assist in framing hypotheses in regards to educational program usage within corrections. Opportunity theory is applicable to the inmates whom I hypothesize are less likely to utilize correctional programs. I expect that inmates who have higher socioeconomic status, shorter sentence lengths, higher levels of education prior to incarceration, are married, have children, and less-

serious (i.e., non-violent, and/or white-collar crimes) crimes are more likely to participate in education while incarcerated. Those with lower SES, longer sentence lengths, lower levels of pre-incarceration education, are not married, have no children, and more serious offenses (i.e., violent, non-white collar, and many street crimes) are less likely to utilize prison educational programs while incarcerated. I then go on to propose that prison educational programs should be designed in such a way as to target inmates who are less likely to participate.

Along with opportunity theory, the concept of prisonization (Clemmer, 1940) will be used to design several hypotheses in regards to participation in educational programs by prison inmates. Clemmer and others (e.g., Sykes 1978) have noticed the existence in prisons of an inmate subculture that exists alongside of and largely in opposition to the mainstream ways of looking at the world that dominate official prison policies. The inmate subculture and the associated “inmate social code” value inmate solidarity and a us-them attitude toward prison officials. Clemmer’s main theoretical contribution is that inmates tend to internalize the criminal attitudes embodied in the inmate subculture during their time in prison, with the consequence that they became prisonized in the sense that their worldview becomes more criminal and less law-abiding the longer they remain within prison walls. The extent of prisonization varies by such factors as sentence length, type of crime, and the extent of continued contact with and ongoing obligations to non-criminals such as spouses who visit them or children they will need to support after release. Inmates with shorter sentences, those who are incarcerated for non-violent crimes, and those who are married or have stable heterosexual relationships and obligations to support children tend to become less prisonized.

To the extent that prison educational programs are viewed by inmates as reflections of the devalued status, and identify those who administer them as their enemy, then those who are most prisonized, being those who are not married, are not in stable heterosexual relationships, are serving long sentences, and are incarcerated for violent crimes are more likely to be immersed in the inmate subculture would be expected to avoid participation in education programs. This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1) Inmates with shorter sentence lengths are more likely to utilize educational programs within the prison system.

Hypothesis 2) Inmates convicted for non-violent crimes are more likely to access educational programs within the prison system.

Hypothesis 3) Inmates who are currently married are more likely than those who are unmarried to utilize educational programs within the prison system.

Hypothesis 4) Inmates who have children are more likely than those without children to utilize educational programs within the prison system.

An additional hypothesis is based on theories of lower class-subculture developed by Cohen (1955), Anderson (1999), and others about lower-class subculture and the “code of the street.” While such subcultures value “street smarts,” they devalue formal education

as a reflection of “middle-class measuring rods” (Cohen, 1955) and cast aspersion on “college boys” who study in order to improve themselves and get ahead. It follows that:

Hypthesis 5) Inmates with lower levels of socio-economic status are less likely to utilize educational programs within the prison system.

## DATA AND METHODS

*The Data:* To investigate the relationship between characteristics of inmates and their likelihood of prison educational program usage within the prison system I use data from the Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities, 2004, which was funded by the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, under the supervision of the United States Bureau of the Census. This is a cross-sectional study of both state and federal male and female inmates currently incarcerated in 2004. In my study, female inmates were eliminated because to properly research the female inmate component would require a separate study in and of itself. The data were gathered through personal interviews of incarcerated inmates administered using Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI).

The sampling design was a two-stage sample. First, institutions were sampled, then inmates within the institutions were sampled. There were 326 prisons that participated in this study out of a total of 1,949 state and federal prisons in the United States, 17,351 out of the 2.2 million state and federal inmates in the nation were interviewed. Missing data for both categorical and continuous variables was accounted

for by creating dummy variables where 1= the data are present, and 0=a missing value. All missing cases in this study are dealt with using listwise deletion.

*Dependent Variables:* Four types of measures are used to assess the usage of educational programs by inmates in American Prisons. The four different types of programs examined are Adult Basic Education, also known as ABE (Kthru9), General Educational Development (HighorGED), vocational (AnyVoc), and post-secondary education in the form of college courses (college2). To measure whether an inmate participated in educational programs of any type verses not participating in any program at all, the dummy variable Edvar was created. Edvar combines all the above mentioned educational programs into one variable(0=no educational program usage; 1=any type of program usage). Additional dependent variables tap the specific type of educational program inmates participated in.

The first of these program type variables is ABE. ABE looks at education programs of a remedial nature. This provides education to inmates at the kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade levels, basic skills such as literacy and basic mathematics are taught. Respondents were asked if they were or were not involved in ABE.

The second dependent variable is GED or High school. General Educational Development (GED) students are preparing to take their GED exams and achieve high school equivalency. Some programs are actually similar to an actual high school outside the prison setting. Respondents were asked if they did or did not participate in such programs.

The third dependent variable is vocational training. Vocational training programs train inmates in various job related fields; whether they be high-tech or an industrial trade. Inmates learn skills much as would be taught at an 'out of prison' vocational school by using classroom instruction and hands-on practical application to learn basic skills. Respondents were asked whether they did or did not participate in any vocational programs throughout the duration of their prison sentences.

The fourth dependent variable examined is college education. College programs offer college courses (and often college degrees) to inmates who are able to take them. Respondents were asked whether they did or did not participate in any higher education programs while in prison.

#### INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

*Previous Education:* Previous education looks at the level of education which an inmate attained before entry into the prison system. Level of previous education was measured categorically by grade, asking respondents what was the highest level of education they had ever completed. Responses range from kindergarten through graduate school. In the regression analysis, the variable is coded for four different levels of education, with level 1 labeled as kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, level 2 labeled as high school, level 3 labeled as some college and college graduates, and level 4 labeled as graduate school. Monthly income looks at the amount of income earned per month that an inmate attained before entry into the prison system. Respondents with missing responses were excluded from the analysis (n=13556, 1.4 percent).

*Types of Crime:* The types of crime variables examine at the specific types of crime for which the inmate was serving time for. Dummy variables were created for violent, drug, property, and public order crimes. Violent crimes are any type of crime which is violent in nature, whether actual violence occurred, or there was a threat of violence. Respondents were asked whether the crime they were currently serving time for is or is not violent. All respondents who did commit a violent crime were labeled as yes, while all respondents who did not commit a violent crime were labeled as no. Public crimes are crimes which hamper the smooth functioning of society and people's "ability to operate efficiently" (Siegel 2004). These are often referred to as victimless crimes such as prostitution, underage sex, and recreational drug use while drug crimes such as distribution, conspiracy to distribute, possession, and possession with intent to distribute was classified under drug crimes. Respondents were asked whether the crime they were sentenced for was or was not in each category. All respondents who did commit a public order crime were labeled yes, while all respondents who did not commit a violent crime were labeled as no. Drug related crimes are any crime in which the respondent was prosecuted for a drug related offence, such as possession, possession with intent to distribute, or conspiracy to distribute. Respondents were asked whether the crime they were sentenced to was or was not a drug crime. All respondents who did commit a drug related crime were labeled as yes, while all respondents who not commit a drug related crime were labeled as no. Property crimes are crimes in which only involve the illicit taking of property or money and the use of force is not involved. This can include such crimes as burglary or theft. Property crime was measured labeling respondents who

responded that they did commit a property crime (yes), and labeling respondents who did not commit this type of crime (no).

A limitation of the type of crime (i.e., violent, drug, public, property) variable was that 11% of the sample population was coded as missing, thus a regression model was run using the combined educational program dependent variable which included a dummy variable which was coded to count the missing data for types of crime as valid and the included data as missing. This determines whether or not this missing data brought about any significant changes in the current regression model. It was found that the missing data did not have a significant effect on the regression model and thus the missing data for types of crime was included within the crime type dummy variables as valid in order to avoid eliminating a large portion of the sample to listwise deletion.

*Sentence Length:* Sentence length looks at the actual length of sentence in years, months, and days of the respondents. For respondents with multiple sentences uses the longest sentence the respondent is currently serving time for. Sentences were assessed using four different methods: flat sentences, maximum time, minimum time, and longest of multiple sentences. A flat sentence is a fixed amount of time such as 10 years with no variance. Sentences which are comprised of a flexible amount of time can vary in nature, such as a sentence in which the respondent serves 5 to 25 years in prison. Five years would be the minimum time while twenty-five years would be the maximum amount of time. The longest of multiple sentences variable automatically singles out the longest of several sentences which the respondent may be serving concurrently, such as a five year sentence for robbery, a 6 month sentence for trespassing, and a 10 year sentence for

distribution of narcotics. The 10 year drug crime is chosen. A variable is created, combining the fixed sentences, maximum sentence lengths for variable length sentences, and the longest of multiple sentences variables. The maximum sentence length is chosen over the minimum sentence length, as the maximum length is determined to be more similar to the fixed sentence variable and the longest of multiple sentences variable, both of which are at their maximum lengths, due to their initial design. The sentence length variable is coded in years, from 0 to 100 years, 100 years being a life sentence. For regression analysis, the log of the combined sentence variable is taken, to create a more standard curve.

Also, a separate dummy variable was created to examine respondents who received a life sentence. Inmates serving life sentences made up a large portion of the sample [7.2%]. Inmates serving life were then substituted for the sentence length variable in a separate set of regression models that tested the effects of serving a life sentence upon educational program usage.

Respondents with missing responses for sentence length were excluded from the analysis (n=13556, 1.2 percent). Because 17% of my data for previous income was missing, I utilized cell mean imputation, by finding the mean income of my sample respondents according to their respective levels of education and imputed those values to the missing values within the income variable. While mean cell imputation may be seen as a limitation of this study, it was deemed necessary in order avoid losing a large number of cases due to missing data.

*Marital Status:* The marital status variable was initially coded as currently married, currently divorced, and never married. Marital status was re-coded to indicate simply whether a respondent was currently married or not, as it was determined that this coding would display more variability within the regression model.

*Children:* The children variable is coded as, the inmate either has children (1 = children) or the inmate does not have children (0 = no children). Because of a high rate of missing data (25% missing) for the variable that indicated whether or not the respondents had children, the missing data was given the mean value for the valid scores (M=.57) through the process of mean imputation. While imputation may be seen as a limitation of this study, it was deemed necessary in order avoid losing a large portion of significant missing data. A dummy variable for the children variable is included to see if the people who are missing are significantly different from those who are not, and it was determined that they were not significantly different.

#### *CONTROL VARIABLES*

Age, race, and whether the respondent was a state or federal inmate are all control variables. Age is a categorical variable, with 1= 16 to 22years, 2= 23 to 28 years, 3= 29 to 34 years, 4= 35 to 50 years, and 5= 51 to 84yrs (n=13356, missing=.1), and is controlled for to examine differences in program usage as male inmates age. Because the sample was 93.4% black, white, or Hispanic, respondents who were Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Native American were excluded. The race variables of black, white, and Hispanic were combined into a single variable and then recoded into

single race dummy variables which were coded as only white, black, and Hispanic in order to control for respondents who coded themselves as being bi-racial.

### *Analytic Strategy*

Since I measure educational program usage with dichotomous variables, I use logistic regression to analyze the data. Binary logistic regression is the appropriate technique to use with dichotomous dependent variables (Swafford 1981). It allows the estimation of the effects of both continuous and categorical independent variables (Swafford 1981; Menard 1995).

To address hypotheses one through five, I used the binary logistic regression model to address the effects of levels of socio-economic status, income, severity of crime and prison educational program usage, and prior levels of education on prison educational program usage. The Exponentiated  $\beta$  coefficients were included in order to show the logged odds that the dependent variables differ from the population means within my study.

## RESULTS

### DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Basic descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics (N=13,356)**

| Variable  | Categories            | %      | Range      | X    | SD   |
|---|-----------------------|--------|------------|------|------|
| Race  |                       |        |            |      |      |
|   | white                 | 36.00% |            | 0.72 | 0.96 |
|   | black                 | 44.10% |            | 1.32 | 1.49 |
|   | hispanic              | 19.90% |            | 0.2  | 0.4  |
| Previous Education <sup>1</sup>                 |                       |        | 1 - 4      | 2.09 | 0.66 |
| Monthly Income <sup>2</sup>                     |                       |        | 1 - 4      | 2.64 | 0.24 |
| Federal or State Inmate (1=federal;<br>0=state) |                       |        |            | 0.19 | 0.39 |
| Marital Status (1=yes; 0=no)                    |                       |        |            | 0.18 | 0.38 |
|   | Married               | 17.90% |            |      |      |
|   | Not Married           | 82.10% |            |      |      |
| Age <sup>3</sup>                                |                       |        | 1 - 5      | 4.2  | 1.14 |
| Type of Crime                                   |                       |        |            |      |      |
|   | Violent Crime         | 44.00% |            | 1.67 | 0.66 |
|   | Drug Crime            | 21.60% |            | 1.89 | 0.56 |
|   | Public Crime          | 3.70%  |            | 2.07 | 0.38 |
|   | Property Crime        | 19.70% |            | 1.91 | 0.54 |
| Sentence Length (years)                         |                       |        | 0 -<br>370 | 19.1 | 27.7 |
| Program Usage                                   |                       |        |            |      |      |
|   | Combined Ed. Program  | 33.40% |            | 0.34 | 0.47 |
|   | College               | 7.70%  |            | 0.08 | 0.27 |
|   | Highschool or GED     | 20%    |            | 0.2  | 0.4  |
|   | Any Vocational Course | 28.20% |            | 0.29 | 0.45 |
|   | K thru 9th grade      | 1.80%  |            | 0.02 | 0.13 |
| Kids (yes or no)                                |                       |        |            | 0.57 | 0.49 |

\*Note: <sup>1</sup>Previous Education 1= K thru 8th grade, 2= high school, 3= college, 4= grad school

<sup>2</sup>Monthly Income 1= \$0 to 599, 2= \$600 to 1199, 3= \$1200 to 2499, 4= \$2500 to 7500

<sup>3</sup>Age 1= 16 to 22yr, 2= 23 to 28yrs, 3= 29 to 34 yrs, 4= 35 to 50yrs, 5= 51 to 84yrs

*Descriptive Analysis:* The men in the sample were primarily non-white, with 44.1% African American, 19.1% Hispanic, with the remaining 36% Caucasian. Of the sampled respondents, 57% had children, and 17.9% were married. Income and educational descriptive statistics would suggest that a large percentage of inmates come into prison lacking in education and below the poverty line in yearly earnings. The mean for the respondent's previous levels of education would seem to suggest that inmates are coming in with primarily some high school education and thus are in dire need of GED or high school equivalency courses. Secondary to that in need would be vocational and post-secondary educational programs. Vocational programming had the highest levels of participation (28.2%), and kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade attracted the fewest (1.8%). College programs, which would seem to be a logical progression for inmates finishing their GEDs along with vocational programs were involved 7.7% of the inmates in the sample and could suggest lack of access to or lack of interest in such programs. Overall program usage was a moderate 34% which suggests that most inmates are not utilizing educational programs within the correctional setting. It would seem that inmates have plenty of time to access these programs, as the mean sentence is 19.3 years.

#### CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS

As displayed in Table 2, the results indicate that type of crime has a limited relationship with all five dependent variables. As hypothesized, the relationships between violent crimes and prison educational program usage was significant but weak, with violent inmates being significantly less likely to utilize programs. The relationships between non-violent types of crime and prison educational programs was largely non-significant. Yet, the relationships displayed for all the dependent variables and sentence

length was significant, although weak, with inmates with *longer* sentences being more likely to utilize all forms of prison educational programming. This is the opposite of the prediction in Hypothesis 1.

Results for socio-economic indicators and educational program usage were mixed. The relationships between overall program usage and status indicators are weak but significant. Inmates with higher levels of previous monthly income are less likely to utilize educational program usage overall ( $r=-0.02$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Inmates with higher levels of previous education are less likely to utilize educational program usage overall ( $r=-0.063$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Inmates with higher levels of previous monthly income were more likely to utilize college education ( $r=.046$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and less likely to utilize high school/GED courses, and kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade course with the relationships being significant but weak. GED and kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade programs have a weak yet significant relationships with previous levels of education, with inmates with higher levels of education being less likely to utilize GED programs ( $r=-0.093$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade programs ( $r=-0.047$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

When examining control variables, some interesting relationships were found, although mixed. Black inmates are significantly more likely to utilize educational programs within prison overall ( $r=0.046$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) while whites are significantly less likely to utilize educational programs within prison overall ( $r=-0.058$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The relationship between Hispanics and overall educational program usage was non-significant. For whites; the relationships with college, vocational, GED, and kindergarten-9<sup>th</sup> grade program usage were significant but weak, with whites being less likely to utilize all programs except for college ( $r=0.043$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 2 Correlation Matrix All Variables (N=13,356)**

|                                       | 1        | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5        | 6        | 7        | 8        | 9       | 10       | 11       | 12       | 13       | 14       | 15       | 16       | 17       | 18   | 19   |  |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------|------|--|
| 1. Combined Ed. Program I             | 1.00     |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 2. College                            | .407 **  | 1.00     |          |          |          |          |          |          |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 3. Any Vocational Program             | .225 **  | .225 **  | 1.00     |          |          |          |          |          |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 4. Highschool/GED                     | .704 **  | -.008    | .114 **  | 1.00     |          |          |          |          |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 5. K thru 9th Grade                   | .193 **  | -.015    | -.100    | .020 *   | 1.00     |          |          |          |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 6. Sentence Length (years)            | .072 **  | .118 **  | .111 **  | .033 **  | -.017 *  | 1.00     |          |          |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 7. Violent Crime                      | -.070 ** | -.085 ** | -.105 ** | -.050 ** | -.026 ** | -.318 ** | 1.00     |          |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 8. Drug Crime                         | -.007    | .008     | .011     | -.019 ** | .010     | .064 **  | .201 **  | 1.00     |         |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 9. Public Crime                       | .009     | -.009    | -.011    | .003     | -.004    | -.040 ** | .535 **  | .556 **  | 1.00    |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 10. Property Crime                    | .033 **  | .010     | .012     | .023 **  | .004     | .065 **  | .223 **  | .328 **  | .564 ** | 1.00     |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 11. Age <sup>0</sup>                  | -.061 ** | .021 *   | -.016    | -.120 ** | .032 **  | .200 **  | -.037 *  | .028 **  | -.016   | .007     | 1.00     |          |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 12. Married (yes or no)               | -.009    | -.011    | -.009 ** | -.029 ** | .011     | -.023 ** | .038 **  | -.005    | .011    | -.002    | .131 **  | 1.00     |          |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 13. Federal or State Inmate           | .111 **  | .052 **  | .041 **  | .033 **  | -.011    | -.098 ** | .235 **  | -.031 ** | .137 ** | .072 **  | .082 **  | .095 **  | 1.00     |          |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 14. Prior Monthly Income <sup>2</sup> | -.020 *  | .046 **  | .006     | -.063 ** | -.029 ** | -.063 ** | .068 **  | -.064 ** | -.001   | -.012    | .022 *   | .077 **  | .098 **  | 1.00     |          |          |          |      |      |  |
| 15. Previous Education <sup>3</sup>   | -.063 ** | .003     | -.004    | -.093 ** | -.047 ** | .000     | .035 **  | .023     | .036 ** | .020 *   | .037 **  | .002     | .043 **  | .100 **  | 1.00     |          |          |      |      |  |
| 16. White                             | -.058 ** | .043 **  | -.036 ** | -.091 ** | -.023 ** | -.013 ** | -.004    | .092 **  | .004    | -.056 ** | .145 **  | -.010    | -.055 ** | .102 **  | .013     | 1.00     |          |      |      |  |
| 17. Black                             | .046 **  | .009     | .058 **  | .075 **  | -.003    | .070 **  | -.035 ** | -.082 ** | -.014   | .039 **  | -.076 ** | -.073 ** | .002     | -.080 ** | .022 *   | -.667 ** | 1.00     |      |      |  |
| 18. Hispanic                          | .012     | -.062 ** | -.028 ** | .016     | .032 **  | -.072 ** | .048 **  | -.009    | .013    | .019 *   | -.080 ** | .102 **  | .064 **  | -.026 ** | -.044 ** | -.373 ** | -.443 ** | 1.00 |      |  |
| 19. Kids (yes or no)                  | .035 **  | -.048 ** | -.008    | -.033    | .004     | .015     | .062     | -.032 ** | .009    | .039 **  | .218 **  | .172 **  | .057 **  | .064 **  | -.004    | -.087    | -.072 ** | .015 | 1.00 |  |

Note: <sup>0</sup>Age mean centered 2= 16 to 22yr, 3= 23 to 28yrs, 4= 29 to 34 yrs, 5= 35 to 50yrs, 6= 51 to 84yrs

<sup>1</sup>Federal or State Inmate 1= Federal, 0= State

<sup>2</sup>Monthly Income 1= \$0 to 599, 2= \$600 to 1199, 3= \$1200 to 2499, 4= \$2500 to 7500

<sup>3</sup>Previous Education mean centered 1= K thru 8th grade, 2= high school, 3= some college, 4= graduate school

\*<p0.05, \*\*<0.01

This association is logical and would support the idea that white inmates come to prison with higher levels of education, thus are less likely to utilize educational programs while in prison. Black inmates are significantly more likely to utilize vocational ( $r=0.058$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and GED programs ( $r=0.075$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Hispanics are significantly less likely to utilize college programs ( $r=-0.062$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and vocational programs ( $r=-0.028$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) while more likely to utilize kindergarten-9<sup>th</sup> grade programs ( $r=0.032$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The associations between educational program usage and black and Latino inmate would seem to support the idea that while both appear to have lower levels of education upon entry, Latino inmates would appear to have far lower levels than black inmates and thus have need for only kindergarten-9<sup>th</sup> grade programs, the most remedial forms of education offered. Inmates with children were found to be significantly more likely to utilize prison educational programs overall ( $r=0.035$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and significantly less likely to utilize college programs ( $r=-0.048$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), while all other relationships for children and educational program were non-significant. A significant association with overall program usage found that older inmates were less likely to utilize educational programs ( $r=-0.061$ ,  $p<0.1$ ). The associations between control variables and overall prison educational program usage were significant except for Hispanic inmates and being married, and did not follow the same patterns as the associations with college, vocational programs, GED programs, and kindergarten-9<sup>th</sup> grade programs.

*Logistic Regression Analysis:* Within this study, the method of analysis used was logistic regression. This method of analysis was used for the purpose of examining the influences of independent and control variables on types of prison educational programs used by United States prison inmates. The educational programs, which have been

discussed previously, are college programs, vocational training programs, GED programs, and kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade programs, and then a variable which combined all four types of programs.

Hypothesis 1 makes the assertion that inmates with shorter sentence lengths are more likely to utilize educational programs within corrections. The results of my study do not uphold this hypothesis. For combined programs, college programs, vocational programs, and high school/GED programs, there was a significant probability that inmates with longer sentences were *more* likely to use educational programs within prisons, while kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade programs were the only programs which were non-significant.

Hypothesis 2 posits that inmates convicted for non-violent crimes are more likely to access educational programs. Inmates who committed violent crimes were used as the reference category and compared to inmates who committed property, drug, and public order crimes. Types of crime that inmates were serving time for has very little effect on educational program usage, and does not support this hypothesis. Only inmates who committed property crimes were more likely to utilize educational programs overall compared to violent offenders. In the regression models for the individual educational programs, only inmates who committed drug crimes were significantly more likely to participate in vocational programming while only those who committed public order crimes were significantly less likely to do so. The results for all other programs were non-significant.

In the third hypothesis, I predict inmates who are married are more likely to utilize prison educational programs than those who are divorced or single. The results

did not support this hypothesis, as all educational programs within my regression models were non-significant.

The fourth hypothesis states that inmates with children are more likely to use prison educational programs than are those without children. The results did not support this hypothesis, as inmates with children were significantly less likely to use prison education programs in the combined regression model and the college model, while all other models were found to be non-significant.

In hypothesis 5, I predict that inmates with lower levels of socio-economic status are less likely to utilize educational programs within the prison system. The results did not support this predication. The variables used to indicate status were previous monthly income, and previous level of education which was mean centered. Tables 3 and 4 indicate that those who are of higher socio-economic status are less likely to utilize educational programs within corrections. In the regression models for overall educational program usage, High school/GED program usage, and kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade program usage, it was indicated that inmates with higher levels of previous income (which is also mean centered) were less likely to utilize educational programs while the effects of both College and Vocational programs were non-significant. Table 3 indicates that inmates with higher levels of previous education were less likely to utilize education programs overall. Table 4 shows significant yet mixed results for all four of the educational programs examined. Inmates with higher levels of previous education were less likely to participate in High school/GED programs and k. through 9<sup>th</sup> grade programs, while more likely to use college and vocational programs. This is expected, since inmates with high school diplomas do not need K – 9 education or a GED.

**Table 3 Predictors of Overall Educational Program Usage within Corrections**

|                           | <u>Model 1</u> | <u>Model 2</u> | <u>Model 3</u> | <u>Model 4</u> |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Variables</b>          | <b>Exp(B)</b>  | <b>Exp(B)</b>  | <b>Exp(B)</b>  | <b>Exp(B)</b>  |
| Hispanic                  | 1.235 ***      | 1.000          | 0.995          | 1.017          |
| Black                     | 1.099 ***      | 1.075 ***      | 1.073 ***      | 1.052 ***      |
| Married or Not (1=yes)    |                | 0.933          | 0.935          | 0.962          |
| Children (1=yes)          |                | 0.879 **       | 0.876 **       | 0.911 *        |
| Children Dummy            |                | 1.128 *        | 0.789 ***      | 1.122 *        |
| Previous Monthly Income   |                | 0.788 ***      | 0.789 ***      | 0.822 ***      |
| Federal or State (1=Fed)  |                | 1.929 ***      | 1.971 ***      | 2.087 ***      |
| Mean Centered Previous Ed |                | 0.951 ***      | 0.952 ***      | 0.949 ***      |
| Mean Centered Age         |                | 0.990 ***      | 0.990 ***      | 0.982 ***      |
| Property crime            |                |                | 1.172 ***      | 1.099 *        |
| Drug Crime                |                |                | 1.046          | 1.008          |
| Public Crime              |                |                | 0.033          | 0.956          |
| Log of Sentence Length    |                |                |                | 1.341 ***      |
| Nagelkerke R Square       | 0.005          | 0.048          | 0.049          | 0.075          |

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

**Table 4 Predictors of Individual Educational Program Usage within Corrections**

| Variables                         | College   | Vocational | Variables                         | High School/GED | K thru 9th |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
|                                   | Model 5   | Model 5    |                                   | Model 4         | Model 4    |
|                                   | Exp(B)    | Exp(B)     |                                   | Exp(B)          | Exp(B)     |
| Hispanic                          | 0.574 *** | 1.048      | Hispanic                          | 1.073           | 1.186      |
| Black                             | 0.928 **  | 1.061 ***  | Black                             | 1.145 ***       | 1.112 *    |
| Married or Not (1=yes)            | 0.977     | 0.994      | Married or Not (1=yes)            | 0.916           | 1.065      |
| Children (1=yes)                  | 0.731 *** | 1.004      | Children (1=yes)                  | 0.958           | 0.979      |
| Children Dummy                    | 0.951     | 1.055      | Children Dummy                    | 1.105           | 1.070      |
| Previous Monthly Income           | 0.822     | 0.897      | Previous Monthly Income           | 0.490 ***       | 0.663 **   |
| Federal or State (1=Fed)          | 1.895 *** | 1.398 ***  | Federal or State (1=Fed)          | 1.480 ***       | 0.845      |
| Property crime                    | 1.091     | 1.042      | Mean Centered Previous Education  | 0.931 ***       | 0.770 ***  |
| Drug Crime                        | 1.097     | 1.135 **   | Mean Centered Age                 | 0.970 ***       | 1.017 **   |
| Public Crime                      | 0.791     | 0.847 *    | Property crime                    | 1.084           | 1.020      |
| Log of Sentence Length            | 1.752 *** | 1.434 ***  | Drug Crime                        | 0.907 *         | 1.226      |
| Mean Centered Previous Education  | 1.276 *** | 1.065 ***  | Public Crime                      | 1.070           | 0.840      |
| Mean Centered Age                 | 0.990 **  | 0.987 ***  | Log of Sentence Length            | 1.240 ***       | 1.017      |
| Age & Prev. Ed. Interaction       | 0.995 *** | 0.998 *    |                                   |                 |            |
| Nagelkerke R Square               | 0.101     | 0.050      | Nagelkerke R Square               | 0.125           | 0.105      |
| Note: *<p0.05, **<0.01, ***<0.001 |           |            | Note: *<p0.05, **<0.01, ***<0.001 |                 |            |

Even though I do not include race in my hypotheses, I examined the effect of race on overall educational program usage, and the individual programs of college, vocational, GED/high school, and kindergarten – 9<sup>th</sup> grades to determine the outcome. I find that race has an interesting effect overall. I use white inmates as the variable of reference and compare them to black and Hispanic inmates. I find that black inmates are significantly more likely to use educational programs overall, while there is no significant difference between white inmates and Hispanic inmates. Based on the results (Table 3), the probability that black inmates are more likely to utilize overall correctional education increases by 5.1 percent. In the regression models for the individual educational programs (Table 4), black inmates have a significantly greater probability of utilizing educational programs than do white inmates for vocational programs and high school/GED programs and a lower probability than white inmates for usage of college educational programs, while the results for kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade were non-significant. Similarly, Hispanic inmates have a significantly lower probability of utilizing college educational programs than do white inmates (Table 4), while the results for all other programs and overall program usage were insignificant (Tables 3 & 4).

While the differences in educational program availability were not specifically examined within this study, I was able to observe whether inmates were more likely to access educational programs based on whether or not they were in state or federal prisons. Results for all five regression models were significant. For the combined program usage regression model, the probability that federal inmates would access educational programs was more than twice as great as for state inmates [ $\exp(B)=2.088$ ]. Inmates within federal prisons were significantly more likely to use educational programs

within corrections for overall program usage, college programs, GED/High school programs, and vocational programs, while Federal inmates were significantly less likely to use kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade programs.

As an aside, regression models were run which included a Life-sentence dummy variable in the place of the sentence length variable in order to test the effect of a life sentence on correctional education program usage.<sup>1</sup>

Within this study, the interaction between respondent's age and respondent's previous level of education were examined to determine if there was an interaction effect present.

Previous education was mean centered along with age. These variables were then included in an interaction variable looking at the interaction effects of age and previous types of prison education on educational program usage. Interactions are, "extra" mean differences that are not explained by the main effects acting alone (Gravetter and Wallnau 2007)" also described as when a multivariate relationship is found to have an effect in a bi-variate relationship over the categories of the control variable (Healey 2005). Main effects are the difference of averages between the strata of one variable (Gravetter and Wallnau 2007). The results for this interaction were intriguing, yet not substantial.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Because 7.2% of inmates were serving life sentences within this sample, which is a fairly large portion of the inmate sample, this variable was included. It was found that inmates who were serving life sentences were significantly less likely (not shown) to use all forms of educational programs including combined program usage except for kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade programs which was non-significant. It was also observed that all of the regression models [except for the K-9<sup>th</sup> grade regression model] which substituted the life sentence dummy variable for the sentence length variable explained less variance than models which had the sentence length variable. Life sentences decrease the potential usefulness of education, especially if the sentence is served without possibility of parole.

<sup>2</sup> Inmates within college and vocational programs were found to be less likely to utilize these programs as they aged, while the results for inmates in K – 9<sup>th</sup> grade programs, GED/high school programs and combined programs were non-significant. Yet one interesting result was that once the interaction variable

## DISCUSSION

This research examined the effects of marital status, having children, socioeconomic status, being a federal or state inmate, type of crime, while controlling for race and age – previous educational status interaction on educational program usage within United States corrections.

When examining overall sentence length, the results indicate that inmates with longer sentences, excluding life sentences, are more likely to utilize prison educational programs. This may result from the fact that inmates who are serving longer sentences would be in higher security facilities which would be less likely to have educational programs available, and because inmates who are not returning to society for a long period of time would not care about participating in programs, because prison would keep them from taking advantage of their newfound skills and knowledge. Yet, alternative theoretical explanations could be that inmates work their way down to lower security facilities through good behavior and then gain access to educational programs, and that inmates take part in educational programs because of a profound sense of self improvement.

In my second hypothesis, which posited that inmates convicted for non-violent crimes were more likely to access educational programs, the results for the most part did not support my hypothesis and were non-significant, yet some results were mixed. For example, when looking at combined program usage, inmates who committed property crimes were significantly more likely than violent offenders to utilize all educational

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block was added as the final block to the regression models, it increased the explained variance for all five of the models included in this study.

programs (Table 3) yet the support for this hypothesis is weak. This would seem to indicate that non-violent offenders are not more likely to use educational programs than are violent offenders.

There was a weak significant relationship between overall program usage and inmates with children. Those with children were 8.9% less likely to use educational programs according to the combined program regression results. Yet, a limitation of this result, or a word of caution for this result is that due to a high level of missing data (25%), mean imputation was used which could possibly reduce the amount of variation produced by the children variable.

Generally speaking, for my fifth hypothesis, which asserted that inmates with lower levels of socio-economic status (SES) upon entry are more likely to use educational programs within corrections, the results were mixed. Inmates with higher levels of education upon entry into prison were often less likely to use prison educational programs, while inmates with higher levels of income upon entry into prison were significantly less likely to utilize GED/high school and kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade courses, while the regression which measured the effects of all the educational programs combined indicated that inmates with more education upon entry into prison were significantly less likely to use prison educational programs overall. It should be noted that for both status indicator variables, the regression that measured the combined effects of all educational programs indicated inmates with higher levels of SES upon entry into prison were less likely to use educational programs. Theoretically, this would be logical, as inmates who have more education upon entry would be less likely to need additional educational programming while incarcerated than inmates with very little education upon

entry, or inmates with more education upon entry do not value the quality of education available within corrections. Yet, this does not seem to support the theories of lower-class culture developed by Cohen (1955), Anderson (1999), and others in which deviant sub-cultures devalue middle class values of studying hard, and trying to be a “college boy” to get ahead, and thus would theoretically be the group who would be less likely to use prison programs, in place of upper class groups. Perhaps future research could examine whether or not such theories of lower-class subculture still apply to contemporary prison culture.

Race, while not discussed within the hypotheses section, did have interesting effects as a control variable. Black inmates are significantly more likely to utilize educational programs than are white inmates, except for college programs in which black and Hispanic inmates were less likely to be involved than are white inmates. Results for Hispanic inmates was largely non-significant when compared to white inmates. Many possible theoretical explanations arise. Perhaps black and Hispanic inmates are more likely to be housed in institutions which do not have access to, or contain post-secondary educational programs. Other potential explanations for lack of significant difference in likelihood of program usage between white and Hispanic inmates are greater discrepancies in educational attainment between Hispanic and white inmates within prison as demonstrated by the negative correlation between Hispanic inmates and previous education levels, and potential language barriers. Yet, an interesting result from the combined program regression is that black inmates are more likely to utilize all educational programs overall than are white inmates. A couple of theoretical explanations for this are that black inmates are more likely to believe in self-

improvement, or that white inmates have higher median levels of education upon entry into prison and thus have less need for educational programs once inside the system.

From a purely theoretical stance, prison could potentially support liberatory education. Inmates with longer sentence lengths appear to be more likely to take advantage of educational programs, and might be more likely to develop the liberation perspective discussed earlier in the theoretical section of this study. Yet, not all prisoners appear to be using educational programs, as overall combined program usage is only 33.4%. More research could possibly be performed to determine why inmates are not using educational programs, which could perhaps aid in designing programs that are more accessible to more inmates. An interesting aside is that inmates in Federal prisons are more than twice as likely to utilize educational programs overall than are state inmates. Future studies could possibly compare and contrast educational program differences between the state and federal prison systems. Looking at the differences between male and female inmates is another topic to be investigated thoroughly, if true improvements are to be made in educational programs within corrections.

This study illuminates several important issues which contribute to the field of sociology and the study of prisons. Clearly there are race and facility- type based differences in educational program usage within prisons which need to be addressed, as we see that Hispanic and black inmates are not being reached by post secondary educational programs within the prison system. Yet we do see that black inmates overall are more likely to use educational programs than are white inmates, which is a promising result if these are high quality programs. Federal inmates are gaining more access to educational programs as is demonstrated when we see that they are more than twice as

likely as state inmates to use educational programs, another positive occurrence. Due to the high rates of incarceration and recidivism within this country, studies which focus on how to improve the life chances of, and potentially how to truly rehabilitate those within prisons will continue to gain in importance, and could potentially lead to ways to reduce prison populations and reduce/eliminate the need for mass incarceration.

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