Equal or Equitable: An Exploration of Educational and Vocational Program Availability for Male and Female Offenders

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FEMALE INCARCERATION in the U.S. has been notorious for gender-stereotyped programming, inadequate medical care, and overall conditions of neglect (Rafter 1995). Specifically, past literature reveals that female inmates were offered fewer opportunities for educational and vocational training than their male counterparts (Arditi et al. 1973). Of the programs that were offered, almost all of them prepared women inmates for "typical" pink collar jobs, such as secretarial work, horticulture, sewing, and service occupations (i.e. laundry and food service). A bleak picture for the future of women inmates emerges when one combines this historical lack of programming with the continuous increase in the number of women inmates entering state and federal facilities. The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that as of June 1999, there were approximately 87,199 women in state and federal prisons (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1999). This is up some 5.5 percent from the previous year, and researchers indicate that the rise in the number of women inmates is outpacing the rise in the number of males entering prison (reported as a 4.3 percent increase) (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1999).

While the opportunities for these growing numbers of incarcerated women appear minimal based upon extant research, most of the research on educational and vocational programs available to female inmates is outdated for the 1990s and is based on a small sample of institutions. Most important, this previous research cannot and does not account for the changing roles of women in today's society. Not only are more women entering post-secondary education, but more women are entering the work force than ever before (U.S. Census Bureau 1997). These changes invite a re-examination of gender disparities in prison programming, because today's female inmate is entering a different economic and educational climate than that of 30 years ago.

Thus, the present study provides a much needed contemporary, nationwide examination of the educational and vocational programs available to male and female inmates from over 470 state institutions. In addition to describing program availability, I present logistic regression analysis to assess the effects of prison gender composition upon educational and vocational program availability, while controlling for other prison-level variables (i.e., age, staff size, population size, regional location, and security level). Last, I explore and discuss some of the policy and social implications of this research.

Literature Review

Academic Education

Academic educational programming is an area where inequalities have long flourished between male and female penal institutions. Arditi et al. (1973) found that several states in his sample lacked "proper" educational programs for women. Michigan, for example, did not provide its female inmates with even a first-through-eighth-grade education. In addition, Michigan and California did not provide any study-release programs for females, but did offer such programs to male inmates. Alabama only provided male inmates with college programs. Nebraska offered only junior college classes to its female inmates, while offering four-year college programs on the premises of all of its male institutions.

This study also revealed that female institutions had fewer teachers, but better inmate/teacher ratios. For example, Ohio had a 57:1 ratio and a 107:1 inmate teacher ratio in its female and male institutions, respectively (Arditi et al. 1973). This lower ratio provided more personal attention for female inmates, while simultaneously inhibiting the scope of training and specialization (i.e., grade level and subject matter) offered to female inmates. The findings of this study, however, are somewhat limited because the authors only examined a small sample of 15 female institutions and 47 male institutions in approximately 14 states.

More recently, Ryan (1984) conducted one of the most comprehensive studies of program availability. He examined academic education program availability across 45 states. He found that 83 percent of the female institutions offered GED and ABE (i.e. Adult Basic Education) programs, while 72 percent had college programs. These results indicated that program availability had definitely increased, but they indicated nothing about the actual participation rates in prison programs nor about the qualitative characteristics of the programming offered.

In terms of participation rates, a study by Morash et al. (1994) of more than 14,592 male inmates and 3,091 female inmates revealed that a slightly greater proportion of females (48.6 percent) than of males (45 percent) had taken part in academic programs since admission to prison. In addition, slightly more females were involved in adult basic education classes and college classes.

This involvement in educational programs is much needed, since current statistics show that many of today's female inmates are entering prison with an educational deficit. A Bureau of Justice Statistics (1994) report revealed that of the female inmates imprisoned in 1991 only 23 percent had completed high school while 33 percent had dropped out of high school. In addition, 20 percent had completed a GED and about 16 percent had some college education. This evidence supports the notion that educational programming in prisons is necessary. Leaving prison with insufficient education or job skills sets these inmates up for a life of struggle and distress.

Vocational Education

An area where female inmates seem to face particularly great disparities is vocational training. Arditi et al. (1973) revealed that males in their study were offered a greater variety of vocational programs than female inmates (males averaged 10.2 programs, while females averaged 2.7 programs). Of the 62 facilities surveyed by the researchers, it was reported that the Department of Corrections often assigned male offenders to specific institutions based upon their rehabilitative needs, while female inmates only had the choice of going to one facility in their state (Arditi et al. 1973). Arditi et al. also showed that female inmates were only offered training in clerical skills, cosmetology, dental assistance, floral design, food service, garment manufacturing, housekeeping, IBM keypunching, and nursing assistance. Male inmates, however, were offered programs in air conditioning repair, auto mechanics, baking, cabinet making, carpentry, chemistry, driving, drafting, electronics, farming, horticulture, laundry preparation, leather work, machine shop, plumbing, printing, tailoring, welding, and many more. Not only were males offered more programs, but they were offered training in programs that could potentially earn them more income upon release.

Glick and Neto (1977) provide additional evidence for the existence of this disparity in their study, which showed that their sample of female institutions most frequently offered vocational programs in clerical skills, cosmetology, and food service. The researchers also point to the dubious utility of these programs. They state, "it is ironic that many correctional institutions have provided vocational training programs in fields where licensing of ex-offenders has been denied" (Glick and Neto 1977: 73). This study reiterates the idea that prisons are not looking towards the future of their inmates. Inmates (both males and females) need job skills that will help "kick start" their resocialization back into society. Fewer opportunities in prison make the reality of successful resocialization for female inmates seem extremely challenging (Simon 1975, Sobel 1982).

Watterson (1996), for example, stated:

> When a woman gets out of prison, she's given $40, a coat, an address and told to go out and see if she can make it. Most women will return; they do so because of stress, fear, and the fact that they haven't learned the skills needed for living more effectively outside while they've been locked up (p. 204).

Research from the 1980s revealed that the number and variety of vocational programs for female offenders had increased compared to earlier decades (Arditi et al. 1973; Glick and Neto 1977). Ryan (1984) reported that 83 percent of the female facilities in his sample had at least one vocational program, with some states such as Texas and Pennsylvania offering 12 to 13 vocational programs. In addition, Crawford (1988) indicated that 90 percent of the female prisons in her sample offered some type of vocational program. Moreover, Weishet (1985) reported that 15 of the women's institutions in his sample offered non-traditional programming, whereas in 1973 none of his sample institutions had offered any type of non-traditional programming for females.

Some of the most current research by Morash et al. (1994) indicated that female inmates are still receiving fewer vocational programs than males and that those they receive tend to be gender stereotyped. Their survey revealed that about 20 percent of males and females were receiving some kind of vocational training. However, a significantly higher percentage of males were involved in auto repair, construction, and trade, while females were most likely to be involved in office training. The present study will build on the available information by examining whether the programs being offered to female inmates are not just equal but equitable in terms of non-traditional training.

Work Training and Prison Industries

Through the 1900s, most correctional institutions have offered some type of industrial training, and work; however, past researchers have discovered that male prisons have enjoyed the upper hand in both the variety and number of industrial programs offered to inmates (Arditi et al., 1973; Glick & Neto, 1977; Gabel, 1982; Pollack-Byrne 1990; Morash et al. 1994). In their 1973 sample of 47 male facilities, Arditi et al. revealed that programs were offered in the following areas: auto repair, bookbindery, cabinet making, cloth manufacturing, concrete, dairy, data processing, detergent manufacturing, farming, flag manufacturing, furniture manufacturing, heavy equipment operation, library, license plate, machine shop, metal shop, printing, road sign manufacturing, shoe manufacturing, engine repair, tailoring, twine manufacturing, and upholstery. Female inmates were only offered industrial programs in canning, food service, garment manufacturing, IBM keypunching, and laundry. It is apparent that a glaring disparity existed between the types and numbers of industrial programs offered to male and female inmates. The results revealed a male to female ratio of 23:5. This constitutes an almost five to one difference in the number of available prison programs.

Many other studies echo the previous findings. Glick and Neto (1977) reported that approximately 63 percent of their sample of female inmates worked while incarcerated. However, the majority (17.3 percent) were employed in food service, followed by sewing jobs (14.3 percent), housekeeping (8.4 percent), clerical (6.2 percent), laundry (5.5 percent), medical (4.2 percent), maintenance (3.4 percent), with 3.2 percent in other occupations. Gabel (1982) showed that 66 percent of the female inmates in her study were also assigned to traditional jobs in laundry, maintenance, food service, and clerical. Morash et al. (1994) revealed that 22.5 percent of the female inmates in their study cleaned and cooked, whereas only 16 percent of male inmates cleaned and cooked. They also showed that males worked more than females in farm, forestry, maintenance, repair, shop industries, textiles, and highway maintenance (Morash et al. 1994). Duncan's (1992) comprehensive study of female prison industries throughout the United States showed that the most commonly offered programs were sewing (25 states), data entry/data processing (16 states), furniture reupholstering and clerical (7 states), and telemarketing and microfilming (6 states). Duncan (1992) concluded that these programs were offering women experience in "real world" occupations, but that equality between male and female work opportunities still posed a problem. She also reported that 14 states had no plans to expand programming for women

offenders due to a lack of space and money, while 36 states planned to expand to develop new programming for female inmates.

Methods

As mentioned previously, existing research indicates that the disparity in correctional programming opportunities between male and female inmates seems to be shrinking. Although this research is informative, much of it is outdated and based on a small sample of institutions. This prison-level analysis provides a much-needed current examination of the educational and vocational programs available to inmates imprisoned during the 1990s. Moreover, it adds to a still somewhat small body of literature that examines programming opportunities inside prison walls.

To meet the goals of this study, all of the 50 states, plus Washington, D.C., were sent letters requesting information about the available academic and vocational programs at their state-run institutions during August of 1996. In addition to the program information, I also requested information about the gender make-up, population size, staff size, security level, and age of all of the institutions within each state. If this information was missing from state reports I acquired it from the 1996 American Correctional Association's Directory of Juvenile and Adult Correctional Department, Institutions, Agencies, and Paroling Authorities.

Each state was given about one month to respond. At about four, six, and ten weeks into the study, follow-up letters were sent to those institutions that failed to respond to the initial request for information. Those states that did not respond after ten weeks were then contacted by telephone. All in all, I received information from 30 states resulting in a sample of 474 institutions (417 male and 47 female).[1] Community correctional facilities, private facilities, co-educational and medical/intake facilities were excluded from the sample.

The dependent variables in this study consisted of 8 dichotomous variables indicating the presence or absence (0=program not offered; 1=program offered) of each particular program at each institution. In terms of academic programming, my two dependent variables were *general education* (i.e., adult basic education, GED, high school) and *college education* (i.e., associate or bachelors degree programs). As Table 1 suggests, approximately 51 percent of the sample institutions offered post-secondary educational programs, while almost 100 percent of the institutions offered some form of general academic programming.

Since there was such a variety of vocational/industrial programs at each of the institutions, each particular program was assigned to a career category as listed in the U.S. Census Bureau's Statistical Abstracts. These six career categories served as my dependent variables for availability of vocational programs: *managerial and professional; technical/sales/administrative support; service; production; operator/fabricator/laborer; and farm/forestry/fishing.* For example, if a particular institution offered a sewing program, then I would assign a "yes" to the operator/fabricator/labor program category, or if an institution offered automotive training, then I would assign a "yes" to the production category. Table 1 shows that 15 percent of the sample institutions offered managerial training programs, 36 percent offered technical sales programs, 72 percent offered service-work training, 54 percent offered production programs, some 42 percent offered operator/fabricator programming, 36 percent of the institutions offered farm, forestry, and fishing program training.[2]

The key explanatory variables of interest here are the various structural characteristics of the prisons. *Gender* composition of the institution is a dummy variable coded (0=male institution and 1=female institution). Table 1 shows that approximately 10 percent (47) of the institutions in the sample were female institutions, while the rest (417) were male. *Age* of the institution is also a dichotomous variable indicating when the institution was built (0=pre 1980; 1=post 1980). Table 1 indicates that approximately 53 percent of the sample institutions were built after 1980, with some 47 percent built prior to 1980. *Security level* was measured with a series of four dummy variables (0=no, 1=yes) including minimum, medium, maximum, and other (i.e. mixed security level). Table 1 suggests that 19 percent of the institutions in the sample had a minimum security classification, 21 percent were medium security level, and 13 percent had a maximum security level. The majority of institutions in the sample (almost 48 percent) housed inmates of mixed security classifications.

In terms of size, *Population size* is a dichotomous variable measuring the average daily population of the institution (0=less than 800; 1=more than 800).[3] Table 1 shows the majority of institutions (i.e. 54 percent) housed more than 800 prisoners. *Staff size* is also a dichotomous variable measuring the number of total staff (i.e. custodial and non-custodial) working full time at the institution on a daily basis (0=less than 300; 1=more than 300).[4] Again, Table 1 reveals that approximately 58 percent of the sample institutions have more than 300 full-time staff.

The final explanatory variable is a regional location variable. The variable *Region* is a dummy variable (0=non-Southern, 1=Southern) measuring whether or not the institution was located in a Southern state as classified by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.[5] Table 1 shows that approximately 40 percent of the institutions in the sample were Southern. This variable was included because Southern institutions have a well-documented history of being the least progressive institutions in terms of academic and vocational program opportunities (Morash et al. 1994).

Results

One of the foremost goals of this paper was to see if women's institutions were offering the same "types" of educational and vocational programs as men's institutions. Table 2 controls for gender of the institution and reveals the percentage of male and female institutions offering each type of academic and vocational program. In terms of general educational programs (i.e. GED and ABE), Table 2 shows that almost 100 percent of both the male and female institutions offer some form of general education. These results run contrary to the previous work of the 1970s, which revealed that several states lacked any kind of general academic programming for women inmates (Arditi et al. 1973). These results indicate that the basic educational opportunities for female inmates have greatly increased in the past 30 years. It is possible that the years of legal battles pursued by female inmates to gain equal access to educational programs have succeeded in doing just that.

In terms of college program availability, Table 2 reveals that 52 percent of female institutions and 51 percent of male institutions offered some form of post-secondary education programs. However, this encouraging evidence of diminishing disparity is tempered by responses indicating that only about half of the institutions combined offered post-secondary education opportunities. It appears that once-thriving post-secondary correctional educational programs are now on the decline. This is very disheartening, because much research shows that post-secondary education works to reduce recidivism and increase self-esteem and employability (Knepper 1990; Harer 1995; Batiuk, Moke, and Rountree 1995).

TABLE 1

*Variables, Metrics, and Descriptive Statistics (full sample)**

		Descriptives			
Variables	**Metrics**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Min.**	**Max.**
Dependent Variables					
General education	(0=no, 1=yes)	.99	.06	0	1
College	(0=no, 1=yes)	.51	.50	0	1
Managerial	(0=no, 1=yes)	.15	.36	0	1
Technical/Sales	(0=no, 1=yes)	.36	.48	0	1
Service	(0=no, 1=yes)	.72	.45	0	1
Production	(0=no, 1=yes)	.54	.49	0	1
Operator/fabricator	(0=no, 1=yes)	.42	.49	0	1
Farm/forestry/fishing	(0=no, 1=yes)	.36	.48	0	1
Explanatory Variables					
Gender	(0=male, 1=female)	.10	.30	0	1
Region	(0=non-Southern, 1=Southern)	.40	.49	0	1
Age of prison	(0=before 1980; 1=after 1980)	.53	.49	0	1
Minimum security	(0=no, 1=yes)	.19	.39	0	1
Medium security	(0=no, 1=yes)	.21	.41	0	1
Maximum security	(0=no, 1=yes)	.13	.33	0	1
Other security	(0=no, 1=yes)	.48	.50	0	1
Population size	(0=less than 800; 1=more than 800)	.54	.49	0	1
Staff size	(0=less than 300; 1=more than 300)	.58	.49	0	1

*The total sample size is 464.

Turning to vocational programming, Table 2 suggests 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 and 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.

Moreover, Table 2 shows that a greater percentage of male institutions offered occupational training in production (46.8 percent vs. 55 percent) and farm/forestry/fishing careers (31.9 percent vs. 37 percent). Some of the most common production courses offered were masonry, automotive, electronics, construction, graphic arts, and building trades (plumbing, electrical, etc.).

Despite this, the results from Table 2 also show improvements in program availability for female inmates. First, a greater percentage of the female institutions are offering vocational training in managerial and professional programs. This is a drastic improvement over past research, which indicated that during the 1970s females were offered no programs of this type and were only offered "typical" female jobs (Arditi et al. 1973). Also, Table 2 shows that more female institutions offer training in operator/fabricator/laborer programs (47 percent vs. 41 percent) than do male institutions. This finding is misleading because the occupation of sewing, which is a female-dominated occupation, fits into this job category. This finding suggests that females are receiving more training in non-traditional occupations when they are actually being trained as seamstresses, a program traditionally offered to female inmates.

In order to discern whether the gendered nature of the institution accounts for specific program availability while also controlling for other prison-level variables, I next conducted logistic regression analysis. Specifically, I estimated the availability of academic education programs and college programs (1=yes; 0=no), while controlling for prison characteristics. As is standard in logistic regression analysis, the exponentiated coefficients are also reported. These can be interpreted as indicating the odds of experiencing the dependent variable per unit change in an independent variable after subtracting the exponentiated coefficient from 1.0 and multiplying the absolute value by 100 (Neter, Wasserman, and Kutner 1989: 588).

Table 3 shows that gender composition of the institution did not significantly affect the likelihood of offering either type of academic programming. In fact, none of the prison variables were significant predictors of academic education program availability. However, Table 3 does indicate that several of the prison background variables were significant predictors of college program availability. Specifically, the exponentiated coefficient for the region variable indicates that Southern prisons are 77 percent (/1-.23/ X100) less likely to offer college programs than non-Southern institutions. This finding is consistent with the past research of Morash et al (1994) and Rafter (1995), which indicate that Southern institutions are the least progressive in terms of program availability, while the Midwest and Northeast are the most progressive.

Moreover, Table 3 reveals that institutions built after 1980 are about 40 percent less likely to offer college programs than institutions built prior to 1980. This finding could reflect the "get tough" policies (three strikes and mandatory sentencing) associated with the 1980s war on drugs. Also, compared to institutions with mixed security levels, the more secure medium and maximum institutions are more likely to offer college programming (i.e., 113 percent, and 184 percent, respectively). Interestingly, staff size was not a statistically significant predictor of college program availability. Intuitively, it would seem that having more staff enables prisons to offer more programming opportunities. However, Arditi et al. (1973) found that larger staff size does not necessarily mean a greater number of educators, but rather more custodial (security) staff.

To further investigate the effects of gender composition on vocational program availability, I estimated logistic regression models of vocational program availability while controlling for the other prison background characteristics. Table 4 reveals that gender composition of the institution was a significant predictor of technical, service, and operator/fabricator/laborer program availability. Specifically, the exponentiated coefficients indicate that women's institutions are 604 percent more likely to offer technical/sales training (i.e., health assistants, clerical staff, and sales associates), 208 percent more likely to offer training in service occupations (i.e., cleaning and food service industries), and almost 100 percent more likely to offer training in the operator/fabricator/labor sector (i.e., sewing). This finding is consistent with past research of Morash et al. (1994), who indicate that women prisoners are likely to be disproportionately involved in cleaning and kitchen work while incarcerated.

Not surprisingly, both the service and technical/sales jobs categories are the most female-dominated occupational categories outside of prison walls. In the United States, some 64 percent of the people employed in the technical/sales jobs are women, and 60 percent of the people employed in the service sector are women (U.S. Census Bureau 1997). These findings suggest that this abundance of traditional programming is preparing females to enter gender-stereotyped occupations in the real world, which are also among the most unstable, low paying jobs.

Moreover, Table 4 also shows that Southern prisons are 66 percent less likely to make managerial programs available to their inmates. They are also less likely to offer technical and service training programs. However, Southern institutions are 74 percent more likely to offer farm, forestry, and fishing programs.

In terms of the age of the prison, Table 4 shows that prisons built after 1980 do not offer more programming opportunities. However, the findings do indicate that newer prisons are about 82 percent more likely to offer managerial training. Overall, these results seem consistent with the get-tough policies of the 1980s.

In addition, the size of the prison, measured by the number of inmates, appears to have little effect on program availability. Specifically, Table 4 reveals that institutions with more than 800 inmates are more likely to offer production training programs (196 percent) and operator/fabricator programs (134 percent). Likewise, it would appear that institutions with a larger staff (i.e., more than 300) offer a greater variety of program opportunities.

Lastly, Table 4 indicates that when compared to prisons with mixed security levels, medium security prisons appear to offer the greatest variability in vocational training. Medium security institutions are more than 100 percent likely to offer every kind of vocational training program. In turn, minimum security facilities are more likely to offer service and farming programs, while maximum security facilities are more likely to offer managerial programs, service training, and farming programs.

TABLE 2

Availability of Programs at Male and Female Institutions

Program	Male Institutions[a]	Female Institutions[b]
General education	100.0%	100.0%
College	51.1%	52.4%
Managerial	14.0%	23.4%
Technical/sales	33.4%	63.8%
Service	70.9%	80.9%
Production	55.0%	46.8%
Operator/fabricator	41.1%	46.8%
Farm/forestry/fishing	37.0%	31.9%

a= 417 institutions
b= 47 institutions

TABLE 3

Logistic Regression Coefficients for Academic Education Program Availability

	General Education			College		
Independent Variables	**Coefficient**	**SE**	**Exp. (coeff)**	**Coefficient**	**SE**	**Exp. (coeff)**
Intercept	4.34	1.84	76.90	.24	.30	1.27
Gender	9.62	160.30	15065.29	.41	.38	1.51
Region	–.44	1.64	.64	–1.48[a]	.24	.23
Age of prison	.62	1.56	1.86	–.49[a]	.23	.61
Minimum	9.44	126.17	12600.97	.59[b]	.33	1.81
Medium	7.86	103.41	2590.99	.76[a]	.29	2.13
Maximum	–2.05	1.67	.13	1.04[a]	.36	2.84
Population size	10.21	68.83	27223.77	.31	.27	1.36
Staff size	–.12	1.53	.89	.20	.30	.50

[a] p<.05
[b] p<.10

TABLE 4

Logistic Regression Coefficients for Vocational Program Availibility

	Coefficient (Exp. Coeff.)					
Variables	**Mang.**	**Tech.**	**Service**	**Prod.**	**Opert.**	**FFF**
Constant	–3.02 (.05)	–1.18 (.31)	.13 (1.14)	–.91 (.40)	–1.09 (.33)	–1.84 (.16)
Gender	1.35[a] (3.86)	1.95[a] (7.04)	1.12[a] (3.08)	.34 (1.40)	.68[b] (1.99)	.31 (1.36)
Region	–1.07[a] (.34)	–.89[a] (.41)	–.67[a] (.51)	.02 (1.02)	–.04 (.96)	.55[a] (1.74)
Age of prison	.60[a] (1.82)	–.12 (.88)	.06 (1.07)	–.04 (.96)	–.52[a] (.59)	–.03 (.97)
Minimum	.51 (1.67)	.40 (1.49)	.75[a] (2.12)	–.02 (.98)	.00 (1.00)	.98[a] (2.66)
Medium	.68[a] (1.97)	.89[a] (2.44)	1.19[a] (3.31)	.92[a] (2.53)	.60[a] (1.83)	1.14[a] (3.13)
Maximum	1.28[a] (3.56)	.32 (1.38)	.83[a] (2.29)	.52 (1.67)	.35 (1.42)	.88[a] (2.42)
Population size	.42 (1.52)	.30 (1.35)	.26 (1.30)	1.08[a] (2.96)	.85[a] (2.34)	.25 (1.28)
Staff size	.61 (1.84)	.55[b] (1.73)	.78[a] (2.18)	.40 (1.49)	.51[b] (1.67)	.58[a] (1.78)

[a] p<.05
[b] p<.10

Discussion and Conclusion

Several conclusions and policy implications flow from this paper. First, it appears that women's prisons are offering equal opportunities in basic education and post-secondary education programming.On the whole, this research indicates that general education programs are readily available across the United States, while post-secondary correctional educational programs are not quite as widespread. The results here showed that only about half of the institutions in the sample offered some type of post-secondary correctional programming. Specifically, the gender composition of the institution proved to be a non-significant predictor of college program availability.

Moreover, it seems that post-secondary programming opportunities are on the decline. In addition, prospects for reversing this trend do not look bright. New laws such as President Clinton's 1994 crime bill, which denied Pell Grant money to inmates, make it unlikely that most inmates will be able to afford post-secondary education while incarcerated. Furthermore, a few of the state officials I spoke to while collecting this data reported that they planned to cut all post-secondary educational opportunities within the next five years.

Second, the research indicates that prisons are offering a greater variety of vocational opportunities than ever before, but women's institutions are still more likely to offer gender-stereotyped vocational training. Specifically, the women's institutions in the sample were significantly more likely than male institutions to offer training in technical/sales/administrative occupations and service occupations (i.e., typical women's work). It is possible, as Pollock-Byrne (1990) suggests, that women's institutions and/or departments of correction are more comfortable relegating this type of service/technical work to females as opposed to male inmates.

Unfortunately, the majority of the jobs these women are being trained for are among the most underpaid and unstable jobs in society. A woman leaving prison with minimal skills, earning minimum wage, will not be able to support herself or her family, and thus may turn to the government for aid or recidivate and find herself back in prison. An in-depth study of incarcerated parents by Gabel and Johnston (1995) indicates that approximately 70 percent of incarcerated women are mothers. Moreover, they report that the majority of "incarcerated mothers plan to resume custody of all or some of their children upon release from prison" (Gabel and Johnston 1995: 26). Not only do these women face enormous stress in reunifying with children and families, but their burden is compounded because they have only been trained for low-paying, gender-stereotyped occupations.

Lastly, it appears that regional location and security level, as opposed to other prison-level characteristics, have strong predictive effects on post-secondary educational and vocational program availability. This calls into question the qualitative nature and philosophy of each state's correctional system. Future researchers may want to examine these qualitative differences to see how a state's punishment philosophy (i.e., rehabilitation, retribution, incapacitation, and deterrence) affects the structure and internal workings of prisons within that state. It would also be interesting to see how community sentiment affects punishment ideology and state legislation for prisoners.

Despite these results, there are several limitations to this research that should be noted. First, the sample only contained information from 30 states, and many larger states such as California were not included. Second, this sample did not include private prisons. Little research has been done on private prisons, and it appears to be an area where much future research is needed to recognize the similarities/differences between these and state/federal institutions.

Third, lumping together many programs into occupational categories may mask some of the unique programs being offered across the country. Many states are offering very progressive programs to inmates and this study did not fully recognize these. For example, Ohio offers a program called ONOW (Orientation to Non-Traditional Occupations for Women), which prepares women inmates for jobs in trade industries. It emphasizes training and information on plumbing, carpentry, electricity, math, physical fitness, employment skills, blueprint reading, job safety issues and sexual harassment issues. The supervisor of this program told me ONOW performs several functions for inmates: 1) it increases their self-esteem; 2) it eases the transition back into the community; 3) it provides inmates with job skills that enable them to be self-sufficient, productive members of the community; and 4) it lowers the recidivism rate of those who have completed the program. Most researchers tend to ignore females when exploring the links between programming and recidivism, employability, etc. As women continue to enter prison at a faster pace than males, future researchers must fully explore the success rates of these and other programs that women inmates are participating in. It appears that women inmates have reached some equality in terms of programming opportunities; however, the equitability of these programs still remains a question.

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Endnotes

[1] The following states responded: Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

[2] I found that the five most available programs offered at women's institutions were: cosmetology, custodial/maintenance, food service preparation, horticulture, sewing, and construction trades. In contrast, the most available programs at male institutions were: automotive, agriculture/livestock, business, barber, building trades, computers, constructions, carpentry, culinary/baking, design/drafting, food service, furniture/upholstery, graphic arts, horticulture, HVAC, laundry, machining, metals, painting, printing, welding, and secretarial. All in all, male institutions offered a much wider variety of vocational programs than did female institutions.

[3] If the documents from each state's department of corrections did not report the average daily population or if the information was outdated, then I acquired the information from the 1996 ACA Directory. This information is based on reported population as of June 30, 1995.

[4] If the documents from each state's department of corrections did not report the average daily staff or if the information was outdated, then I acquired the information from the 1996 ACA Directory. This information is based on the reported number of staff as of June 30, 1995.

[5] Regional assignments were based on information from the Bureau of Justice Statistic's report: Comparing Federal and State Prison Inmates, 1995. The Bureau of Justice Statistics classify the following states as Southern: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.