

Teaching Inside the Box: A Phenomenological Study of Correctional Teachers Working  
in Segregation/ Restrictive Housing Units

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Heather Jileen Lindstrom

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Dr. Julie Ernst, Advisor

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my daughter Brenna. You are my heart. Every day I am inspired by your strength, resilience and sense of humor. Know that I am with you on your journey and I love you to the moon and back. We got this.

## **Abstract**

Research regarding teachers who work in segregation/restrictive housing units within correctional facilities is lacking. Little is known about their experiences and how the trauma they encounter impacts them personally and professionally. Despite this lack of information, prison reforms continue to seek increased educational involvement in segregation/restrictive housing units without understanding the resources needed to recruit, train and retain teachers for this setting. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to acquire firsthand information toward understanding the impact working in segregation/restrictive housing units has on teachers. Five teachers from varying prisons participated in in-depth interviews and shared their experiences teaching offenders in segregation/restrictive housing units. The results of this study show the impact of trauma, the lack of professional recognition, and the unique barriers these teachers face. The findings also show teachers in segregation/restrictive housing units in correctional facilities are resilient and find meaning in their work. The outcomes of this study have implications for researchers in corrections and education fields, teachers working in corrections, providers of professional development, teacher preparation programs and administrators in correctional education who seek to improve professional experiences for their employees.

*Keywords:* segregation, restrictive housing, education, corrections, corrections education, trauma

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background and Setting**

Education in the United States is complicated. The increasing complexities which students are bringing to the schoolhouse door are challenging for well-trained veteran teachers in traditional “mainstream” schools. In non-traditional settings, such as correctional settings (jails, prisons and/or detention centers), the intensity of student need is even greater, yet the provision of teacher training to address such student issues is lacking (Houchins, Puckett-Patterson, Crosby, Shippen, & Jolivette, 2009). Despite the exacerbated needs and deficit of training, there remains a chasm in the lack of research about the impact of these settings on the teachers themselves.

Approximately 15, 000 teachers work in our country’s correctional facilities and juvenile detention centers (Rosales, 2007). Each day, these teachers work with students in the segregation/restrictive housing units and mental health living units found within prisons. The results of this work are noted in academic research as being impactful and capable of producing significant change, yet its core elements are unrecognized. It is difficult to find research which has been conducted regarding those who deliver the educational services in restrictive housing units and mental health living units, yet policy reform in both education and corrections include increased educational opportunities in restrictive settings. If the changes being called for are to be implemented and sustained, there must be an understanding of the processes which are (or are not) occurring regarding education in these settings. Information gathered directly from both students



*and* teachers in such settings should be given significant weight in the development, implementation and assessment of policy reform.

**Correctional education.** While many may think of the impact of correctional education as “small,” In reflection, it is further reaching than one might think.

Correctional education occurs in every state in a variety of settings. In 2014, the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics recorded 1,561,500 prisoners held in state and federal correctional facilities (Carson, 2015), and in 2016 this number rose to 2.2 million (Executive Office of the President, 2016). Further breakdowns of these facilities indicate 95 state detention facilities dedicated to housing juveniles and 1,237 local juvenile detention facilities across the country (Read & O’Cummings, 2010). Two hundred and eighty-four state operated facilities provide juvenile correctional services, as do 739 local sites.

Within the United States, 281 adult correctional facilities received Federal Title I, Part D funding indicating they were serving children and youth under 21 years of age (Read & O’Cummings, 2010). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention recorded 54,148 juveniles (persons ages 18 and under) as being placed in public and/or private correctional facilities in 2013 (Hockenbury & Sickmund, 2016). More than two-thirds of offenders incarcerated within state operated facilities do not have a high school diploma (Western, 2008). The numbers of people impacted by education in correctional facilities is significant enough that the United States Department of Education created a separate Office of Correctional Education in 1991, and as it explains on its website (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/correctional-education.html>):

Correctional education is a fundamental component of rehabilitative programming offered in juvenile justice confinement facilities, most American prisons, and many jails and detention centers. Correctional populations are over-represented with individuals having below average levels of educational attainment.

Education ‘behind bars’ presents an opportunity for the incarcerated to prepare for success upon release. A wide variety of administering entities operate correctional institutions in the United States, and a wide variety of organizations are the providers of onsite prison education programs. (2016, para. 1)

**Correctional educational environment.** While the needs of students within the myriad of national facilities are complex, the correctional environment is fraught with violence and sexualization resulting from the continuous corporeality and traumatic experience. Due to the nature of this setting, correctional staff are exposed to varying degrees of direct or indirect (also known as vicarious or secondary trauma) emotional, psychological and/or physical trauma (Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007). Working within these settings is difficult taxing work that takes a physical and emotional toll, which many educational staff are not prepared to face on a professional or personal level. The depth of this is best explained by Spinaris, Denof and Morton (2013), in their paper “The Impact of Traumatic Exposure on Correctional Professionals.” They state:

When both indirect and direct traumatic experiences are considered, it becomes clear that virtually everyone in the corrections arena is inherently at risk for being exposed to trauma or of having experienced trauma. In fact, there may be no other work environment where a significant percentage of all involved—both the corrections professionals and the justice involved individuals they manage—

suffer from the consequences of exposure to psychologically traumatic material and other high-stress events. (p.8)

As Mader (2015) noted in her work, many new teachers are unprepared for responding to the diverse, low-income students and the trauma that can impact students from those backgrounds, as well as from a range of backgrounds. If teachers are to be working with students who have challenging backgrounds and circumstances, they must be adequately prepared; this is particularly needed for teachers in unique environments such as correctional facilities. The daunting needs are summarized well by Crosby, Gay, Baroni and Somers (2015):

Student trauma creates significant impediments to learning and requires teachers to have trauma-specific knowledge, proper self-care, and support from administration to employ creative and nontraditional teaching strategies. School staff also needs to understand how to translate this knowledge into classroom and schoolwide strategies. (p.353)

Despite recognition of the under-preparation of teachers to work in correctional facilities (Gagnon, Houchins & Murphy, 2012), the performance standards and outcome expectations remain as rigorous, if not higher than those experienced by teaching peers in mainstream educational settings (Gagnon, et al., 2012). There is a need among all teachers for high quality professional development which is longer than a day, based on state content standards has a lasting positive impact on teacher and student behaviors and be regularly evaluated (Birman et al., 2007). This need may arguably be even greater among teachers working in correctional education. Additionally, teachers serving

students with disabilities must adhere to the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) regarding adequate yearly progress and promotion of research based instructional strategies (Gagnon et al., 2012). These expectations can be arduous even in academic settings that enjoy the luxury of a supportive community, administration, faculty and student body. In the correctional setting, they become even more challenging considering the extreme demands of the setting and audience.

Further specifications for instruction of students in correctional facilities are provided through 2014 correspondence from Dr. Melody Musgrove, Director of the Office of Special Education Programs and Mr. Michael K. Yudin, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education (OSEP) and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) (Musgrove & Yudin 2015). In this correspondence, the United States federal government reiterated to all state and local education agencies that students with disabilities who are incarcerated are entitled to the same rights and procedural safeguards as students with disabilities receive in traditional mainstream schools. This correspondence further instructed that students may not be excluded from education in correctional facilities because of disciplinary action. Additionally, if students cannot physically access education due to being segregated from the general prison population due to safety and security concerns, then education must be brought to the student. For students in segregation/restrictive housing, this usually involves teachers bringing instructional materials down to a solitary confinement or lockdown units and teaching students in that setting at a level commensurate with his or her peers in the facility's educational program (Musgrove & Yudin, 2015).

**Segregation/restrictive housing units.** In correctional facilities, when inmates are removed from the general population, restricted from everyday activities and moved into different housing, they are “segregated.” The process of separation is referred to as “segregation,” and “segregation” may also be used as the name of the unit itself. Restriction and limited, if any, participation in everyday activities such as recreation, shared meals, and religious, educational, and other programs is part of the how the “segregated” or “segregation” status or unit is defined (Metcalf et al., 2013). Segregation is also known as *administrative close supervision, administrative confinement, administrative maximum, administrative segregation, behavior modification, departmental segregation, inmate segregation, intensive management, locked unit, maximum control unit, restrictive housing, security control, security housing unit, segregated housing, special housing unit, special management*, or in the colloquialisms of *the Hole, the Box* or simply *seg* (Metcalf et al. 2013). Inmates usually spend 23 hours a day in their cells when in these placements. Inmates or offenders who are placed in segregation require high levels of supervision and usually placed in the unit because of being a threat to themselves, others, or the overall safety of the institution. In certain facilities, offenders may request to be placed in segregation/restrictive housing/restrictive housing units for their own protection (Metcalf et al., 2013). It is important to note language within the correctional system is changing from using “segregated” and “segregation” to “restricted”, “restrictive” and “restrictive housing.” However, now all the terms are used interchangeably. With the drive for reform to house inmates in the least punitive setting possible to fulfill penological purposes, it is anticipated “restrictive

housing” will be more commonly used across facilities in the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016).

The conditions of segregation/restrictive housing units stand in stark contrast to classrooms and education settings. Browne, Cambier and Agha (2011) provide a description of a segregation/restrictive housing cell in Pelican Bay State Prison (California) in 1995:

Each cell is 80 square feet and comes equipped with two built-in bunks and a toilet-sink unit. Cell doors are made of heavy gauge perforated metal; this design prevents objects from being thrown through the door but also significantly blocks vision and light.... [The] interior is designed to reduce visual stimulation.... The cells are windowless; the walls are white concrete. When inside the cell, all one can see through the perforated metal door is another white wall. (2011, p.1228)

Rienzi (2015) shares civil liberty worker Gabriel Eber’s first-hand descriptions of a segregation/restrictive housing unit in the in his article for Johns Hopkins University Gazette. The stories offer insight into situations few teachers would ever be trained to address, yet under law, if a student is ages 18-21 and in segregation/restrictive housing, education comes to him or her regardless of the setting and resources available to the teacher. It is clear from these accounts it is clear even a highly skilled teacher would struggle to provide any type of significant instruction in such a setting.

Rienzi (2015) includes accounts by Gabriel Eber which describe horrific conditions in the prison which include rat-infested cells, unsanitary living conditions and extremely limited human contact for months and even years. In this facility, men

commonly mutilate themselves and attempt suicide (Rienzi, 2015). In this account, Eber further goes on to say inmates leave their cell door tray slot's open in attempts to gain attention or help for medical help, food or access to personal hygiene equipment. If an inmate refuses to close the tray, Eber describes that the correctional officers will use pepper spray through the open slot to subdue the inmate. In efforts to gain attention or as acts of defiance, men will stuff items into their toilets to flood their cells, use electrical sockets to set items on fire, or cause themselves personal harm or injury (Rienzi, 2015).

Even more horrific than these situations, are the occurrences in the isolation units, where men are confined to small cells, behind solid metal doors:

Human contact is limited to the few times during the day that staff come to the front of the cell to deliver a food tray or for brief mental health or medical rounds...Out-of-cell time for exercise occurs at best an hour a day a few times a week. Conversations with inmates in other cells are possible only by shouting. Prisoners might be deprived of the opportunity to shower for days at a time. A television is mounted on a wall at a distance across the dayroom, and it is often impossible to see or hear. Access to the telephone is almost nonexistent. Toilets frequently back up, so inmates are forced to defecate on their food trays and slide them through slots.... (Rienzi, 2015, para. 14)

In Minnesota, a state known for prison reform and rehabilitation, the segregation/restrictive housing unit at the Stillwater correctional facility in Bayport, Minnesota was called "hell on earth" prior to a new one being constructed in 2008. A

description from a July 16, 2008 *Star Tribune* newspaper article portrays the following scene:

This is life inside the segregation unit in Minnesota's largest prison, where 110 men on four tiers rattle and bang their way through the day, assaulting the senses with vulgarities and other rude remarks. They start fires, flood their sinks and toilets, pelt officers through the bars with spit, blood and human waste, attack with fists and knees. By afternoon the noise will rise to a deafening blend of shouts, name calling and political statements. This is a hell-on-earth place, a prison within a prison. (Giles, 2008, para. 3)

**Education in segregation/restrictive housing units.** As instructed by the federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) (Musgrove & Yudin, 2014) if a special education student is placed in a segregation/restrictive housing unit, the teacher, they must provide the high-quality education required by federal law. Juveniles, up to the age of 18 must receive education while placed in segregation/restrictive housing unit. If a young adult aged 18-21 qualifies for special education services he/she must have his/her education continued in the setting, as well as, receive special education services. In 1992, the United States signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which includes several articles and provisions related to the education of incarcerated individuals. However, while the United States acknowledges an offender's right to an education while in prison, the process for providing the education, except for juveniles and students receiving special education services, is left to each state to develop. In recent years, as the full realization of the impact of segregation/restrictive



housing unit on an individual is being understood, education has also been used as an intervention to prevent offenders engaging in negative behavior and as an incentive to support positive behavior both with the overall goal to assist with reintegration into general population (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016).

Regardless of a teacher's background, training, and resources available, and in setting rife with elevated levels of trauma and violence, teachers are to fulfill this charge (Musgrove & Yudin, 2015). Segregation/restrictive housing units are designed for custody and control and purposefully limit face-to-face contact. This makes many types of traditional teaching methods difficult to implement. Technology such as computers, calculators or iPads cannot be used as they present safety concerns (Wilkerson, Gagnon, Mason-Williams & Lane 2012). Books maybe brought in, but most correctional facilities only allow softcover texts and limit the number an offender may have in his or cell. Access to things such as paper and writing instruments varies from facility to facility and is dependent on organizational policy, offender behavior and potential risk level. These challenges are further exacerbated by the fact that prison teaching environments exist within organizational structures that embody a rigid hierarchy and an authoritarian chain of command and embrace a bevy of policies and procedures (Geraci, 2002). This rigorous delineation of roles and responsibilities creates an "us" versus "them" mentality which governs all interpersonal interactions within the prison walls (Wright, 2005). This stratified taxonomy leaves no space for unique identities or professional roles. The lines are clearly drawn between "staff" and "offenders" with no space for humanization by either side towards the other.

Just like segregation/restrictive housing units are not equipped for educational instruction, educational instructors are not equipped for segregation/restrictive housing units. Most teachers in corrections education are licensed in the K-12 system and do not receive specialized training in their collegiate licensure programs (Geraci, 2002; Wright, 2005). If teachers receive any training at prior to entering their classrooms in the prison, it is the same training provided to all staff in the correctional system. Correctional officers receive on-going training in self-defense and situational management tactics and have ready access to equipment such as mace/pepper spray, hand cuffs, gloves and radios. Teachers, however, commonly enter these units only with general pedagogical knowledge and carrying radios.

Ashcroft (1999), in his 1992 and 1993 surveys of over 200 California teachers in correctional and detention facilities, found that most teachers had not received formal training in working correctional settings and were essentially educating themselves about the issues they were encountering. While educational reform implementation of No Child Left Behind required teachers in all settings – even correctional settings – to receive professional development in academic rigor, there is no requirement for professional development to address the complex needs of the students nor the traumatic experiences professionals will encounter in these settings. Ashcroft (1999) stated:

The influence of student and setting characteristics as a component of professional identity is compelling enough that correctional education teachers who do not engage in professional identity activities such as workshops or conferences are at risk of identifying with the prevailing institutional culture for their professional identity. In other words, those who do not actively work to

establish an identity as an alternative educator may come to see themselves as extensions of the custodial mission of the restrictive setting, institutional or otherwise. (p.84)

For alternative and correctional teachers, Ashcroft (1999) suggests the student and setting characteristics appear to be a strong enough feature of what those teachers do that it becomes a discipline, much like special education.

Teachers in prisons serve in unique roles. Teachers must follow the protocols of safety and security of the institution yet create a setting which consistently replicates an experience found outside the prison walls (Wright, 2014). The ability to successfully walk in both worlds requires a strong sense of self-identity and recognition of the uniqueness of the role. Matthews, as cited in Wright (2005), explains the inherent dilemmas correctional teachers face describing how teachers are professionals who are part of the helping system and now find themselves working within an institution and system developed to punish not for assistance or rehabilitation. Additionally, she notes teachers and prison staff are ideologically opposed yet somehow must find ways to overcome this to maintain a safe environment (in Wright, 2005).

Wright (2005) utilizes acculturation theory to explain the unique social-psychological phenomena experienced by correctional teachers. In his article, he describes how teachers in prisons become enmeshed in its culture to survive both personally and professionally. Wright (2005) notes:

The prison house alters the teachers' bounding and use of physical space, as teachers adopt a military syntax of space ordered according to rules of risk, danger and control. (Some teachers maintain a heightened fearfulness of prison

spaces forever, so might talk about ‘paranoiac spaces’ as a feature of prison teaching cultures.). Teachers become accustomed and eventually immersed in the institutional morass of observation and reporting (tools of vigilance) to counter the threat of riot and crisis and learn to control inmate movement in space and across time. (p.24)

As teachers working in prisons learn to prioritize the physical control of inmate movement and internalize elements of hypervigilance, they move from a state of “acculturation” to “assimilation” (Wright, 2005). Teachers let go of or lose many of the defining elements (thinking, feeling and acting) they use to define themselves as educational professionals (Wright, 2005).

While Ashcroft (1999) discusses the elements (student characteristics, setting specificities, teacher preparation and licensure issued) used for teachers in correctional settings in defining their role and profession, Wright (2005) explains there is a psychological impact on correctional teachers as they move through the four stages of culture shock in their search for professional identity. The stages, which are based on the intercultural education work of Jandt (2004), are: 1. Tourist, Disintegration and Difference; 2. Exile or Marginal, Reintegration; 3. Stranger; 4. Gradual Adjustment – Settler (Wright, 2005). However, movement through this process, for teachers in correctional facilities, remains largely unexplored in academic literature or studies (Wright, 2005). This is an intricate, delicate process which consists of complex attempts to find power and status in a climate which is inherently hostile (Wright, 2005). The lack of recognition of this process in professional development, literature and research, continues to contribute to feelings of marginalization by those who teach in prison and

perceptions of bastardization of their profession. Gagnon et al., (2012) in their study on professional development in juvenile corrections reiterate the lack of preparation teacher have prior to entering a correctional setting that are specifically focused to the needs of their students and their environment. Their study underscores the lack of awareness of the impact of a correctional setting on an educational professional.

Department of Corrections policies also reflect this lack of awareness of the impact on educational staff. Many state department of corrections (DOCs) have policies which require correctional staff to work no more than two years in a segregation/restrictive housing unit. After that time, the correctional employees are rotated out into another position. For example, the Minnesota Department of Corrections Division Directive 301.083 States “All staff assigned to segregation units are re-assigned for a minimum period of three months after two years of continuous assignment” (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2016). Oregon’s Department of Corrections (n.d.) has the following policy in place:

291-011-0020 ...(c) Staff may not be assigned to a disciplinary segregation post for a period exceeding 24 consecutive months. Any staff having been assigned to a disciplinary segregation post for 24 consecutive months must be reassigned to a post not associated with a special housing unit for a minimum of six months.

The rationale for limiting the professional assignment to 24 months, is the belief that correctional staff need to disconnect from the daily trauma and dysfunction found in a segregation/restrictive housing unit. Such relief allows staff time for emotional recovery from a very demanding job. Currently, this policy is not specifically in place for the educational staff that support and serve in these units. It is at the discretion of each

facility administration as to how long teachers are assigned to provide education for segregation/restrictive housing units.

Similarly, there is a body of literature that suggests the need for self-care for correctional workers (Dehof, Spinaris, & Morton, 2014; Finney, Stergiopoulos, Hensel, Bonato, & Dewa, 2013; Triplett, Mullings, & Scarborough, 1996). Much has recently been written about “Corrections Fatigue” and burnout which occurs at high rates for staff working within the penal system. However, the focus of this research and subsequent recommendations is, and remains, on correctional officers and administrators. No research exists on this phenomenon for educational staff working in these settings, yet the expectation exists for the provision of continued quality instruction in such settings but without recommendations for support of the professionals involved.

In recent years, the K-12 system has seen heightened awareness of the impact of trauma on students, and several large research studies addressing adverse childhood experiences have been conducted. These seminal works have shown classrooms across the nation have students who have experienced major traumatic events, resulting in the need for specialized instruction and responsive environments. There also is research addressing the impact of vicarious trauma and trauma worker fatigue on those who work with children who have had adverse childhood experiences. However, this research has been mostly limited to investigating and responding to the needs of therapists and social workers who work with this population. The needs, issues, concerns and strengths of teachers who routinely work with students and families who have experienced trauma have not yet been substantially explored in research. Nor have the needs, issues, concerns and strengths of the teachers who educate students in the some of the toughest settings in

the country – segregation/restrictive housing units, in the deepest part of the penal system –been thoroughly researched. In essence, the needs of the students are clearly represented in trauma research, but we have not begun to scratch the surface of the needs of teachers who educate them.

Consequently, there is minimal research to guide the development of supportive recommendations in response to the exposure to the direct or vicarious traumatic experiences encountered by teachers in correctional settings. Much hue and cry arise about students entering the school-to-prison-pipeline, but rarely does educational research extend into the realm of correctional facilities to determine what the environment is like for the professionals bound to follow the same statutes, laws and rules as their colleagues in traditional settings. Because little research has been done on this specific area of education, there is little to no understanding of the true environment correctional teachers face by those who govern their profession. For example, events that are accepted as routine in prisons would be considered abhorrent in education, yet no consideration is given to the emotional impact of these practices on the teachers who continually bear witness to such events. A vivid illustration of such a practice and the implied code of silence for teachers in prison environments is from the court case of *Madrid v. Gomez* (1995). Violet Baker, an education supervisor who encountered “caging,” which is the practice of leaving inmates naked in outdoor woven metal cages the approximate size of telephone booths:

Violet Baker, a former educational program supervisor at Pelican Bay, gave a frank and credible account of one such incident. She testified that one day in late January or early February, she was walking from her office toward another

facility. It was very cold (she was wearing gloves and a heavy jacket), and it was pouring rain. She observed two African–American inmates being held naked in two cages. When she passed by again one hour later, one inmate was still there, and she observed that he was covered with goose bumps. He said he was freezing, and asked her to request a pair of shorts and a T-shirt. She then saw an officer coming in her direction. When she looked at him, he looked back and just shrugged his shoulders, saying it was “Lieutenant's order.” When she determined that it was Lieutenant Slayton on duty, she let the matter drop. Although the incident upset her, Slayton had a reputation for causing problems if crossed, and she did not want her educational program or teachers to suffer by her interference in this matter. (p. 1171)

Information contained in the court transcripts from *Madrid v. Gomez* (1995) further note that Ms. Baker subsequently went on medical leave for an extended period.

While the provision of high quality and responsive education is to be provided to students who have experienced and manifest symptomatology of traumatic events, no examination has been done on the impact of these experiences on the professionals who are instructing in violent environments filled with daily trauma and violence. The silence of the teachers and educational professionals in these situations is deafening. Their needs and experiences need to be heard and considered as educational policies are developed and implemented in these restrictive settings.

### **Research Purpose**

Teachers in correctional settings are charged with providing high quality education to students in correctional facilities, including segregation/restrictive housing



units within these correctional facilities. This is challenging, as the setting itself is often wrought with violence, and the inmates have and/or continue to experience traumatic experiences. While other fields such as social work and psychology have recognized the impact this has on professionals, and while the impact on correctional staff has been studied, this impact has not been studied with teachers who serve in segregation/restrictive housing units in the correctional setting. Thus, this study seeks to address the following research question: *How do correctional teachers' direct and vicarious experiences with trauma impact their personal and professional lives, and how can they be assisted and supported?* An understanding of these experiences and impact is necessary for informing recommendations toward supporting correctional teachers in providing high quality instruction in segregated/restrictive housing units and responding to their personal and professional needs.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Both corrections and education have long standing histories as major social institutions in America. Each is a highly complex system, subject to its own set of rules, regulations and norms. Both institutions have been subject to major reforms across the decades and experienced philosophical changes and procedures that have shaped each one's purpose and place in the societal landscape of the United States.

Correctional and educational programs impact millions of lives every year in our country. They touch people's lives across all demographic groupings in the United States. Given the billions of dollars spent each year to develop, implement, maintain and assess these programs, there is strong interest across many levels of society in discovering the strengths and areas of need in each system. The potential power and influence of corrections and education to impact and shape the behavior – for better or worse – of those involved in these systems has brought both into the twin spotlights of academic research and national policy reform.

With increased recognition of both systems' struggles with disparity and inequality, an increased sense of urgency has marked recent reform efforts aimed at those who have been perceived to be primarily impacted by being placed in correctional and educational settings. Feelings of an immediate sense of need for systemic change have led to deeper investigations of each system and identification of significant areas of concern which impact the efficient delivery of both correctional and educational services.

These areas of identified concern have raised a multitude of questions not only about those placed in these systems, but also those who work directly in correctional and educational institutions. If corrections and education are to evolve to meet new societal expectations, an increased understanding of how these two institutional giants interact must be examined. This understanding can be developed through a closer examination of their shared developmental histories, connected legislative mandates, common professional concerns and present implementation trends found through reviewing academic literature that is pertinent to corrections and education as a united entity – correctional education.

### **History of the Correctional System**

**1600's-1790's.** The origins of the correctional system in the United States can be traced back to the penal system in use in Europe in the 1600's, specifically English Common Law. Given the young country's perceived need for a strong social contract, a house of detention was one of the first buildings colonists erected in the New World (Karpinski, 2014). As colonial American was founded on Puritan religious beliefs, corporal and capital punishment were the methods most commonly used to address those who violated social norms (Seiter, 2005). Response to crime was focused on retribution and punishment. Wrong-doers were not usually held for long periods of time in houses of detention (or what are now known as jails or prisons). These buildings were used as short term holding spaces until public displays of humiliation or execution could be arranged. It was believed that punishing individuals in public satisfied a collective, larger need among the community for revenge and discouraged others from repeating acts which were perceived to create disharmony among the masses (Wodahl & Garland, 2009).

During this time, children were viewed as chattel – the property of their parents. The colonies had specific laws demanding children obey their parents and severe corporal punishment for a child who committed a crime. The community could (and would) demand that the father of a child publicly whips, banish, beat or kill his child if the society held the child criminally responsible for an action. These harsh responses were believed necessary to maintain the social and religious mores of the community and to educate its members in the expectations of society (Finley, 2007).

Families who could not manage their children's behaviors were subject to community involvement in disciplinary practices. Under colonial law, children who were determined to be non-cooperative or unable to follow family and societal rules and norms for basic behavior would be removed from their families. These children would place with other community members until they could improve their behavior (The Laws and Liberties of Massachusetts, 1648). As Keely (2004) explains this type of response to misbehavior is the foundation for correctional education as it establishes the use of out of home placement and education for troubled children.

Punishments for children who violated colonial law usually fell to the family, the community and the church. However, for certain egregious crimes and in situations where societal and familial interventions were unable to terminate unacceptable behavior, the child would be subjected to the court system and enter in to the traditions of British Common Law. At this stage, children would be detained in the house of detention with adults. Children between the ages of one and seven years old were not considered by the court to be capable of being responsible or mature enough to commit a crime. For children between seven and 14 years old, the court believed they were responsible for

their actions, but the court took into consideration if the children could understand the intent of the act. If they were deemed able to understand the intent, they received the same punishment, including capital punishment, as an adult. Children 14 and over were responsible for their actions and able to understand the intent of their acts and automatically treated as adults by the colonial court system (Finley, 2007 p.147).

**1790's-1890's.** With the spread of the age of Enlightenment from Europe to the New World, beliefs about deviant behavior shifted from blaming spiritual entities, such as the Devil, solely for criminal behavior to perceiving factors driving these actions may be controllable by man (Wodahl & Garland, 2009). This change in perception of the origin of deviance led to new ideas for responding to violations of societal norms. During this time, William Penn and the Quakers promoted opposition to capital punishment and corporal punishment, offering instead the option of a system of long-term incarceration. The American Revolution further supported the ideas of the Quakers and promoted widespread rejection of the traditional British system of justice which had been brought to the colonies. So, by 1820 most states had eliminated the death penalty, except for the most heinous of crimes such as murder and treason (Teeters, 1955).

This reform brought into being the “penitentiary” (taken from “penitence”) as a new model for reforming and deterring deviant behavior (Teeters, 1955). The Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia was converted to the first penitentiary in 1789 (Barnes, 1927; Teeters, 1955). Prior to the penitentiary system, prisoners were housed together in large common areas with no differentiation for age, sex, offense or mental health needs (Barnes, 1927). The Walnut Street jail stressed separation and confined each prisoner to his or her own cell with the idea that he or she would eat, sleep, do labor and reflect on

his or crime in silence and solitude until the end of the sentence (Barnes, 1927; Teeters, 1955). Stressing reform through salvation and religious belief, or the Pennsylvania Model (which is what the Walnut Street Jail became known as) was replicated in Europe (Barnes, 1927; Teeters, 1955). Education was provided to juvenile and adult prisoners by chaplains and volunteers who came into the prison to initially provide religious counseling (Keely, 2004). This form of education became known as “Sabbath School” and was encouraged by Puritans to help the offender develop into a moral- and value-based person (Gehring, 1995). The primary drawback to the Pennsylvania Model was its focus on housing prisoners in solitary cells. With its strong emphasis on self-reflection and penance, contact and interactions between prisoners and other people was severely restricted. Thus, by 1844, doctors began to make connections between solitary confinement and serious mental instability in prisoners (Jackson, 1927).

The competition to the Pennsylvania Model was the New York Model located in the Auburn penitentiaries. Like the Pennsylvania Model found at the Walnut Street jail, prisoners had separate cells to sleep in but came together for meals and common labor. Prisoners were not allowed to speak to each other and rarely allowed to communicate with guards. The New York Model was a congregate model which had prisoners doing hard labor in shops during the day and sleeping in solitary confinement at night. Prisoners were not differentiated by sex, age, crime or mental health needs. It was believed through hard work and discipline a prisoner could develop good work habits. Discipline was harsh and swift for all prisoners. There was no provision of education or chaplains (Meskell, 1999). Because this system proved to be more economically profitable for

states than the Pennsylvania Model it became part of the standard for American prisons for decades to come (Meskell, 1999).

In 1825, to separate children and adolescents who were poor and destitute but had not committed crimes from adults who had acted in a criminal manner, the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism established the first House of Refuge in New York (Krisberg & Austin, 1993). Within three years, Boston and Philadelphia also had Houses of Refuge spring up to staunch the flow of delinquency among poor urban youth. This movement is considered the beginning of the juvenile justice system (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, n.d.).

The United States quickly expanded its continuous continental territory through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 from France. A series of purchases of lands from other countries and cessations would result in the United States doubling in size within 50 short years. This rapid expansion, combined with the destruction and economic hardship of the Civil War, resulted in the development of the lease system and penal farm in the Southern states and territories as alternatives to the penitentiary model in the North (Banks, 2005). The lease system allowed prisoners, usually African-American men, to be leased to private parties for the provision of hard labor (Mancini, 1996). The leasee was responsible for the provision of food, shelter and clothing to the prisoners and to maximize profits, only the essentials were readily available (Mancini, 1996). Under this penal system, educational programming was not specifically offered as it was believed practical life lessons would be learned through daily manual labor and industry.

The years from 1826-1840 saw the increased secular education introduced to correctional programming (Gehring, 1995). Prison education was usually centered on

basic educational subjects such as reading, math and writing (Gehring, 1995). In 1847, New York would become the first state to mandate some type of educational programming be offered in all correctional facilities (Wolford, 1989).

The penal farm concept of incarceration for adults developed during this time as well. Located primarily in Southern states and territories, penal farms were large self-contained areas of land which usually housed agricultural industries (although some had others such as mining) where prisoners were sent to for rehabilitation by labor (Banks, 2005). Penal farms were in rural areas and a few still exist today (Banks, 2005). When they initially were created, the focus of penal farms was like the lease system – hard manual labor would provide the reform and education needed for an offender to return to society.

As the nation expanded and changes occurred in addressing adult acts of deviancy, methods for treating juvenile delinquency also changed. Deviancy among juveniles was viewed as being a treatable and curable condition by society (Keeley, 2004). This view gave rise to institutions known as “reformatories,” in which children who violated the norms of society were incarcerated and separated from adult offenders until they reformed their behavior. Jerome Miller notes in his 1998 bibliographical account *The Last One Over the Wall*, the Massachusetts’ Lyman School for Boys opened in 1846 and was unique in its separation of children and adolescents who committed crimes from adult offenders. The young men in this facility were subjected to a strict code of conduct, religious indoctrination, and taught a trade. Such facilities and reform schools which modeled adult placements came from the work of child advocates and philanthropists. These programs offered options, other than adult settings, for placing



adolescents and children who were living in poverty in urban areas and displaying acting-out behaviors (Krisberg & Austin, 1993).

Increasing numbers of families were moving into the cities from the rural countryside during this time due to economic hardships in rural America. The struggles of the families were reflected in increasing numbers of youth being identified as juvenile delinquents (Siegel & Senna, 1981). While displaced youth with limited access to resources struggled to survive in a new and unfamiliar environment, society debated between punitive and reformatory methodologies for addressing their behaviors which were considered outside of societal norms. The controversies in current times surrounding the concept of the “school-to-prison” pipeline and recent calls for the closure of youth prisons have roots in conversations occurring during this time (McCarthy, Schiraldi & Shark, 2016).

From 1789-1895 through the Sabbath School model, teachers educated adult and juvenile offenders in poorly lit spaces, areas lacking ventilation, and by passing books between the bars of cells (Gehring, 1995). While, corrections were slow to accept education as a full partner in offender reform, teachers continued to work within adult and juvenile institutions in deplorable conditions with professional dignity and sincerity (Gehring, 1995). The result of this dedication was recognized by the Boston Prison Discipline Society who observed prisons without education programs had higher annual death rates than those who had schools (Gehring, 1995).

**1890’s-1930’s.** Correctional education has long been tied to the concept of vocational education (Schlossman, 1992). While it may have promoted under the guise of reform and self-enlightenment for offenders, the essence of correctional education during

the late 1890s and early 1900s was to either aid offender in being more productive in prison industries or to assist an offender in finding redemption through instruction in religious doctrine (Schlossman, 1992). In his 1900 report, describing the reformatory system in place in the United States, Barrows describes their purpose and rising popularity:

The prisoners are seen to be defective fellow-beings, unsuitable for a free exercise of their rights and privileges, and unable or unwilling (it matters not which) to properly provide for themselves within the laws and moral standards of conduct that pervade our civilization. They are not to be killed or painfully punished to satisfy a revengeful public sentiment, nor yet coddled for the comfort of the pitiful and to their own hurt. They are imprisoned to be cured or restrained. The State no longer smites these enemies of its public order, but educates them at public cost and for the public protection. (p. 27)

The late 1800's and early 1900's was a unique time in corrections and correctional education. It was during this time when corrections began to discontinue the use of contracted prison labor. While this decreased the exploitation of offenders, it left gaps in overall prison management and financial solvency (Schlossman, 1992). These gaps led to contention among many stakeholders, including teachers and therapists, as to how correctional education should be operationalized within the correctional system.

Correctional teachers were not prepared for the ensuing battles to define their role in prison reform (Schlossman, 1992). Correctional teachers naively assumed offenders were basically psychologically intact but limited in academic achievement. They believed psychological tools and assessments should be used to guide an offender's academic and

vocational instruction based on his/her expressed preference and individual traits. In contrast, psychological professionals focused on the differences between offenders and other adults. The development of the concept of pathology directly challenged education's position and the division between the two fields became even more prominent after World War II, with psychology dominating education. The domination of psychological theory over educational theory unfortunately would drive prison reform and hinder innovation in correctional education for decades to come (Schlossman, 1992).

In 1899, juvenile courts were separated from adult courts, with the first separation occurring in Chicago, Illinois (Rothman, 1980). Despite the separation, youth who were perceived as "delinquent" often ended up being placed in large reformatories. These facilities allowed corporal punishment, such as whippings, and forced youth to follow unrealistic schedules and expectations (Rothman, 1980). Sadly, despite many reformatories being only a few steps away from penitentiaries, the number of youth placed in them increased after the truncation of the court system at the end of the 1800s (Rothman, 1980). This increase occurred as many youths were sentenced to reformatories for perceived crimes such as running away and being ungovernable (Rothman, 1980).

Education for juveniles in reformatories focused on instruction in mathematics, reading, and skills for the trades (International Penal Penitentiary Commission, 1900). Several reformatories were modeled after military organizations and the educational components stressed regimented discipline and physical education (International Penal Penitentiary Commission, 1900). The exception to the military model of education in the reformatory setting occurred at Bedford Hills which was a reformatory for women in New York (Chlup, 2005). From 1900-1914, Bedford Hills was helmed by

Superintendent Katharine Bement Davis who advocated for the closer examination of the mental health needs of offenders (Davis, 1913). She was among the first correctional administrators to attempt to develop educational programming specifically tailored for those who were sentenced to reformatories, and her work came to be used as a best practice model for other institutions (Chlup, 2005).

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the implementation of therapeutic models in many prisons. This inevitably led to a shift away from continued isolation and segregation/restrictive housing practices (Rotman, 1995). Criminality and deviance were viewed as illnesses that could be treated within a therapeutic correctional facility, which was focused on remediating an offender's dysfunctional upbringing or lack of socialization (Rotman, 1995).

In keeping with the societal mindset of social reform, the Mutual Welfare League was established in 1895 and lasted until the mid-1920s (Davidson, 1995). The Mutual Welfare League at Sing Sing Prison in New York allowed prisoners to create a system of self-government (Messemer, 2011). Within this system, prisoners developed a sense of community that included holding each other accountable for minor infractions of prison rules (Blumenthal, 2004) This level of engagement and investment helped provide effective prison management (Tannenbaum, 1993) and allowed for offenders to develop levels of citizenship education (Arbenz, 1995).

**1930's-1960's.** The three decades from 1930 to the end of 1960 are marked by several historical occurrences in correctional education. After touring most of correctional facilities in the United States, the Assistant Director of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons, Austin MacCormick wrote "The Education of Adult Prisoners: A Survey and

Program” that described a new streamlined model of education for adult offenders (Hunsinger, 1997). His model was novel as it proposed offenders should be offered educational opportunities because they had not been adequately educated in society prior to incarceration (Hunsinger, 1997). MacCormick proposed educational programming should be supported by all factions of a correctional institution so that offenders could return to their communities as more responsible individuals who can contribute positively to society (Hunsinger, 1997). He recognized correctional education programs were underfunded and advocated for allowing offenders to pursue education based on individual interests not mandated instruction (Chlup, 2005). Additionally, MacCormick recognized the specific need to use adult educational techniques with students in adult prisons. He emphasized even though adult learners in correctional facilities may not have mastered materials others learned in elementary school, this was not an excuse to use materials developed for a younger population (Chlup, 2005).

MacCormick advocated for teachers who work in prisons to develop ways to educate all incarcerated students in a manner appropriate to both their chronological age and academic ability level. His work eventually led to the establishment of the Correctional Education Association, which supported the professional development of corrections teachers and dissemination of information related to teaching incarcerated students (Correctional Education Association, 2007). The organization is still active today and serves those who teach in correctional facilities in the United States and other countries. (Correctional Education Association, 2007).

Corrections education during this time is marked by the rise of social education programs, particularly in response to recovery from World War II (WWII). An example

of this can be seen in the work of Miriam Van Waters who became the superintendent of the Massachusetts Reformatory for Women at Framingham from 1932-1957 (Chlup, 2005). Van Waters implemented reforms such as referring to female offenders exclusively as “students,” keeping nursing mothers and infants together, and inclusion of social agencies and organizations in community reintegration efforts for offenders (Freedman, 1996).

Despite progressive experimentation with prison governance, programming and policy, the years after WWII saw an increase in incarceration rates. Following WWII, construction rates rose as the American economy recovered. Building prisons became an expense many states were unwilling to shoulder, resulting in more offenders being added to existing facilities (Rotman, 1995). The subsequent overcrowding led to miserable conditions, overcrowding and rising tensions. Ultimately, the day-to-day realities of running and maintaining prisons would rapidly overwhelm attempts at progressive programming during this time (Rotman, 1995).

In 1955 amid the United States’ involvement in Vietnam and following on the heels of the historic ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education*, The United Nations adopted the “United Nations Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.” This international set of rules outlined what a consensus of countries agreed were appropriate treatment for prisoners and management of penal institutions. These rules were distinctly rehabilitative in nature and specifically included language allowing prisoners to have access to books for instructional and general reading (United Nations, Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, 1955). It further goes on to state:

Provision shall be made for the further education of all prisoners capable of profiting thereby, including religious instruction in the countries where this is possible. The education of illiterates and young prisoners shall be compulsory and special attention shall be paid to it by the administration...So far as practicable, the education of prisoners shall be integrated with the educational system of the country so that after their release they may continue their education without difficulty. (p.12)

As the need for education and other rehabilitative measures for offenders was recognized at an international level, offenders in American prisons began to voice opposition to overcrowded conditions, difficulties accessing medical and mental health care, lack of participation in facility management, and brutality at the hands of prison staff. Tense situations escalated into prison riots in New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio, California, New Mexico, Massachusetts, Washington and Minnesota (Rotman, 1995). This widespread national unrest marked the beginning of the Prisoner's Rights Movement (Rotman, 1995).

**1960- Present.** From 1965 to 2000, the United States prison population grew by 600%. In Texas alone, the prison population increased by 1,200% during this time (Perkinson, 2010). Despite the calls for prison policy reform, including enhanced educational opportunities brought forward by the violent inmate takeover of the Attica prison in New York (Chlup, 2005), the country adopted more stringent "get tough on crime" policies and mandates, and funding went into building "supermax style" prisons and supporting death rows, while educational programming and the availability of counseling declined (Perkinson, 2010). Because of the difficulty in measuring the impact

of education on an offender while he or she was incarcerated and due to variability in how offenders were assessed, in the 1980s and 1990s it became common to believe “nothing worked” to help rehabilitate offenders because outward change was not easily observed (Morris, 1995).

As Keely notes, some erosion occurred between 1975 and 1997 regarding educational benefits for incarcerated individuals – especially juveniles (2004). He further explains education was intentionally addressed in the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Keely, 2004). According to Lewis, Schwartz and Ianacone (1988), the Act required “correctional administrators ... to pay greater attention to the special education needs of handicapped offenders” (p 88). This support would be amended in the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act which included a section removing the requirement to assess youth in adult facilities who were unidentified but may potentially have a disability (Keely, 2004). Additionally, The Violent Crime Control Act of 1993 and the Higher Education Act Reauthorization Act of 1994 specifically eliminated the availability of Pell Grant funding for offenders (Chlup, 2005). This resulted in the cessation of many opportunities for people who were incarcerated to access opportunities in higher education (Chlup, 2005).

Ninety-five percent (95%) of all offenders who are incarcerated in state facilities will be released and attempt to reintegrate back into society after their period of confinement, according data provided by The Bureau of Justice Statistics and the U.S. Department of Justice (Hughes & Wilson, 2003). As mentioned previously, more than two-thirds of this same population will enter prison without a high school diploma (Western, 2008). For this population to attempt to return to society with a criminal record



and lacking a high school diploma would create almost insurmountable barriers to securing legal employment that provides a living wage and serves as a deterrent to returning to engagement in criminal activity as a means for the provision of basic economic needs.

In their 2013 study for the RAND Corporation regarding the overall effectiveness of correctional education, Davis et al. state:

The recession of 2008, led to a 6 percent decrease in states' correctional education budgets between fiscal years 2009 and 2012, but it had a much larger impact on states with large and medium prison populations (a 20 and 10 percent decrease, respectively)" (p. 3).

While these budget cuts were destructive to programming, the RAND Corporation meta-analysis of correctional education programs, still found inmates who participated in educational programming while incarcerated had a 43% lower chance of recidivating than those who did not participate, and the odds of inmates who participated in educational programming finding employment post release could be increased up to 13% (Davis et al., 2014). This same study found every \$1 spent on correctional education saved \$5 on recidivism costs, thus further promoting the concept of education as a cost-effective method of criminal rehabilitation.

Taliaferro, Pham and Cielinski, in their 2016 report for on trends, gaps and opportunities in correctional education and training further reinforce the importance and impact of providing accessibility to quality correctional education for offenders to

improve societal reintegration, especially for Black and Latino offenders who historically have faced implicit bias and continued disenfranchisement across systems. They explain:

Taking this entire context into account, this report examines correctional education, as it is a critical aspect of the complex mass incarceration system that can make a real difference in reversing this vicious cycle. While correctional education and training is by no means a panacea for the grave injustices of this system, it can play an important role in improving the educational and employment trajectories of the returning citizens who face greatly restricted opportunities to participate in our economic mainstream (p.2).

Based on largely on the research of the 2013 RAND Corporation meta-analysis, President Obama's administration launched the Second Chance Pell Grant Pilot Program on July 31, 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Beginning in 2016, approved pilot programs would work with eligible offenders to increase opportunities for them to access higher education programs while they were incarcerated (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The Second Chance Pell Grant monies would pay for an offender's tuition, fees, books and supplies as required by a postsecondary program (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The overall objective of the program being to help offenders get the knowledge and skills needed so they can re-enter society with increased employability potential and subsequently be able to contribute more to their families and community (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

### **Correctional Facility Legislation and Federal Mandates in the United States**

There are numerous federal and state laws, policies and mandates that impact the day-to-day operations of a correctional facility including education-related operations.

These laws and mandates impact the delivery of educational services within the prison system, yet the impact is not discussed. This can be seen in the one which is currently at the forefront in all facilities – adult, juvenile, state, federal and county – is the Prison Rape Elimination Action also known as PREA. PREA (P.L. 108-79) was passed in 2003, without opposition, to address the problem of sexual abuse of people in custody of any correctional agency at any level of control in the United States. PREA encompasses staff misconduct with inmates and in-on-inmate abuse and, as compliance is tied to funding, the reforms it mandates touch all aspects of prison operations (National PREA Resource Center, n.d.). PREA specifically provides:

...for a “knock and announce” practice when an opposite gender staff member enters a housing unit and, more generally, provides that facilities are to implement policies and procedures that enable inmates to shower, perform bodily functions, and change clothing without nonmedical staff of the opposite gender viewing their breasts, buttocks, or genitalia, except in exigent circumstances or when such viewing is incidental to routine cell checks. (para. 1)

Based on this requirement, teachers who provide education to offenders- opposite their gender - in segregation/restrictive housing units, must announce their presence to all offenders on the unit prior to beginning an educational session. Given the behavioral challenges inherent in segregation/restrictive housing units, this type of action often creates substantial distractions which are disruptive to a learning environment.

Additionally, many teachers express, via personal conversations with the researcher, experiencing heightened gender specific harassment from offenders following a “knock and announce.” This type of harassment is often dehumanizing, and while it may not

stem directly from the offenders targeted for education, it can have a deep and lasting impact on teacher morale.

Following at the heels of the implementation of PREA, the United States Department of Justice in January of 2016, issued its final report discussing the use of recommendations for restrictive housing placements in prisons. The report references a 2015 speech at the NAACP National Convention, where then President Barack Obama announced that he had asked Attorney General Loretta Lynch to conduct a review of the overuse of solitary confinement across American prisons. The Justice Department utilized this directive to evaluate the policies and procedures which were in place within prison and correctional facilities to manage the most violent, disruptive and aggressive inmates. The report examined how placement in segregation/restrictive housing impacted these populations and what other options may be available which were more humane. The report also examined how the most vulnerable could be protected without placement into a solitary setting as well (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016).

The result was a comprehensive 123-page report which examined the impact of segregation/restrictive housing on all demographics of offenders, including juveniles and adults. Within the report, the Department of Justice noted offenders between the ages of 18-24 had incomplete brain development. In response, the Department of Justice stated, "All correctional staff should receive training on young adult brain development, and appropriate de-escalation tactics. Training should incorporate reliable, evidence-based science" (2016, p.101). Educational staff and specific academic strategies, however, were not addressed in this report despite a preponderance of evidence necessitating the need for academic success as a tool in the prevention of recidivism. The report reviews

programming policies occurring in federal prisons, which are subsequently put forth as recommendations for state correctional facilities and programs. On page 53, the U.S. Department of Justice describes offenders housed in the mental health units of Administrative Maximum Facilities (ADX) receiving several interventions to assist with mental health treatment and improve offender outcomes for the duration of their incarceration. Specifically, the report notes, “A variety of educational and religious in-cell programming is also made available to inmates” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016 p.53.).

To support the proactive and effective policies in place within federal prisons and to present developmental models for states to follow recommendations were put forth for additional supports and trainings for correctional staff based on a report from the U.S. Department of Justice issued in 2016. The final document read:

This Report recommends that the Bureau incorporate these principles, as well as the new policies described below, into existing training classes and curriculum (e.g., Introduction of Correctional Techniques; quarterly SHU training; and training for lieutenants, captains, disciplinary hearing officers, psychologists, and reentry affairs coordinators). In addition, the Bureau should regularly train all correctional staff on its restrictive housing policies. This training should incorporate reliable, evidence-based science on the potential effects of restrictive housing on vulnerable populations, including young adults (ages 18-24) and inmates with serious mental illness (p. 106).

Despite the 2014 requirements by the United States Department of Education - Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) that required that education be

offered in restrictive and segregated settings for juveniles, and despite notations of the importance of educational programming for juvenile offenders and offenders in segregated mental health units in the 2016 Department of Justice Report, specialized training for educational staff was not among the recommendations put forth by the Department of Justice in their 2016 Report and Recommendations Concerning the Use of Restrictive Housing.

### **Preparing and Training Correctional Professionals**

At its most fundamental level, a prison is a warehouse for human beings. In the United States, individual states continue to wrestle with making the focus of imprisonment punishment or rehabilitation. This struggle can often be seen within the staff in correctional institutions as they wrestle to reconcile personal beliefs and bias with the policies and procedures of a larger system. Training and preparation programming (or lack of) for all correctional personnel also struggle with prioritizing punishment or rehabilitation in teaching the correctional workforce how to work with offenders.

Prisons make up a large, behemoth system with complex “moving parts.” It is a system which includes a variety of roles which are crucial to its day-to-day operation. Because of the size of a prison and the obvious need for a focus on safety and security, it stands to reason that all staff within its walls must be aware of and adhere to basic policies and procedures to ensure smooth operation. Failure of one section of the employees within a prison to meet systemic expectations will quickly impact the entire functioning of the system. Thus, preparation and training of correction staff generally focuses on safety and security, as well as on compliance with existing policies. Research by Lerman and Page (2012) supports the concept that full and successful implementation and execution of any new policy, procedure and/or routine must have buy in and

acceptance from frontline staff – i.e. correctional officers. Given the increased understanding of the importance of a deeper understanding of staff and the gravity of the need for staff buy in for carrying out systemic change, prison administration has placed a great deal of emphasis on individualized, personalized staff training for correctional officers in recent years.

In contrast, there is little training specifically for the teachers who work in correctional settings. Teachers who work in correctional facilities do not receive specific training in collegiate licensure preparation programs to instruct in correctional facilities. Continuing education opportunities offered by facilities for staff is usually focused on issues relevant to non-teaching staff. Ongoing professional development specifically developed for teachers in correctional facilities usually is within the individual correctional facility's education department or offered by the Correction Education Association (CEA) – an organization developed specifically in 1930 to support teachers in the prison system (McGlone, 2008).

A body of research that has the potential to guide correctional work, and particularly inform training for teachers who work in correctional settings, is the 1998 research by Felitti et al. on Adverse Childhood Experiences. Their study examined 9,508 respondents from a survey sent to members of a major health insurance company. The results showed a connection between the experience of adverse events in childhood (such as psychological, physical, or sexual abuse; violence against mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal, or ever imprisoned) and the development of physical illness and at-risk behaviors later in life. As dissemination of this information spread across professional disciplines, further

research followed and the concepts of “trauma” and “trauma-informed practices” became buzzwords in social work, psychology, juvenile justice and public health. However, only in recent years has the education field has begun to recognize the importance of understanding the impact of trauma on students’ ability to learn and perform in the classroom setting, and the topic is emergent in the field corrections education.

Calls for prison reform – particularly concerning the incarceration of juveniles – often cite research connecting incarceration to disruptions in brain development, lack of educational engagement and cultural and socio-economic barriers to community resources and employment (McCarthy et al., 2016); Schiraldi, Western, & Bradner, 2015). Recommendations for implementing these reforms also state the need for improved staff training and specifically in the case of incarcerated juveniles a shift from the mindset of custody and control (McCarthy et al., 2016); Schiraldi et al., 2015). These suggestions echo those presented for improvements in the adult prison system, specifically in segregation/restrictive housing units.

### **Impact of Correctional Settings on Workers**

In recent years, correctional organizations have shown increased recognition of the serious emotional and physical impacts of working in professions which require individuals to continually display heightened vigilance, endure repeated exposure to death, injury and violence, work in physically demanding situations, and maintain strict security protocols and regulations (Dehof, Spinaris, & Morton, 2014). Data gathered from numerous sources has shown working in corrections takes a very real toll on employees who pass through the gates (Denhof et al., 2014; Finn, 2000). Rogers (2001) found staggering levels of depression, feeling of hopelessness, and suicidal ideation in a survey of 3,800 correctional officers conducted for the Connecticut Department of



Corrections. A comprehensive review of the research available surrounding the concept of correctional staff burnout (the emotional and psychological withdrawal which comes from an ever-increasing workload and organizational stress) found significant gaps and a lack of effective interventions (Lambert et al., 2015). Given billions of dollars are spent every year on the prison industry and that on average 70% of the operating costs of a facility are related to staff (Camp & Lambert, 2006), it would seem more attention should be given to the unique work which occurs in corrections, rather than relying on the extrapolation of burnout and trauma research from related fields (Lambert, Hogan, Griffin & Kelley, 2015).

Spinaris, Denhof, and Kellaway (2012) estimate during a correctional professional's career he or she will "... experience an average of 28 exposures to violence, injury or death-related events and involving events of ... different types" (p.13). The results of the same study found increases in both the total number of exposures and the number of types of exposures negatively impacted several scores related to health, daily functioning and personal wellbeing. The wellbeing of correctional officers has been found by researchers to be significant enough that recommendations have been made for departments to address it and incorporate supports into the overall structure of the organization (Marzuki & Ishak, 2011).

The cumulative impact of not addressing the traumatic events, organizational stressors and operational procedures on correctional workers can lead to a phenomenon known as "Corrections Fatigue" (Denhof et al., 2014). Corrections Fatigue presents in multiple ways which can negatively impact a corrections environment. Unaddressed, Corrections Fatigue can result in dysfunctional work dynamics, presentation of negative

personality traits and personal health problems that may quickly compromise the safety and security of a correctional environment and put personnel in danger (Denhof et al., 2014). As awareness of Corrections Fatigue increases, many correctional training programs for correctional officers and supervisors now address the need for self-care and personal wellbeing. Unfortunately, such training and support is not specifically recognized by corrections administration as being needed for teaching staff who work in the same environment and have contact with the same populations.

In 2002, Gehring and Hollingsworth identified six problems unique to professionals teaching in corrections. They discuss the special challenges teachers in correctional facilities face and the lower salary these teachers receive in comparison to their peers. The authors note students in the prison classroom are very different than students in traditional education systems. The students are frequently manipulative, not highly motivated and resistant.

Among the problems recognized by Gehring and Hollingsworth (2002), is the incredibly disheartening environment correctional teachers work within. It is noted by the authors, teachers in correctional facilities work in institutions with staff who often show open disrespect to educational programming and with situations where educational programming is not adequately staffed or funded. These unique challenges contribute to professional burnout which can be a precursor to Corrections Fatigue, but the research literature remains silent on the impact.

In their role, teachers in correctional facilities must not only address the professional issues noted above which can lead to Corrections Fatigue, but because of the nature of their work and interactions with inmates, they are susceptible to Compassion

Fatigue. Corrections Fatigue develops over time and is a process which negatively impacts the emotional, spiritual and physical abilities and functioning of those who work in corrections. Compassion Fatigue, while like Corrections Fatigue, differs as it specifically involves repeated exposure to vicarious trauma. As Khilnani (2015) explains, “Although akin to compassion fatigue, corrections fatigue is not necessarily associated with exposure to secondary trauma, whereas the hallmark of CF [Compassion Fatigue] is the repeated vicarious exposure to traumatic events.”

Caring for students is inherent in teaching, even in the correctional systems. Even though teachers may put significant personal and professional boundaries in place in these settings, they still care about their students’ learning, engagement and investment in the educational process and their relationships are different than those of other correctional professionals who maybe focused solely on custody and control. Figley (1995) explained the cost of caring for individuals, such as offenders, who have experienced traumatic events is the risk of developing Compassion Fatigue. Developing Compassion Fatigue means experiencing not only the deep physical and emotional fatigue, but the loss of empathy and compassion which may be the core of a teacher’s motivation (Figley, 1995).

Teachers who work in correctional facilities, especially those who serve the segregation/restrictive housing units, are exposed on a regular basis to all the elements of both Corrections Fatigue and Compassion Fatigue. Because of the nature of segregation/restrictive housing units, the experiences may be even more intense than the usual correctional classroom and possibly have a deeper professional or personal impact on the teacher. Yet, there is no designated training or support for these specific teaching

professionals, despite loud calls for reform at all levels for overall changes in segregation/restrictive housing units. It is a significant burden to request or mandate changes without understanding the perspectives of all the stakeholders and giving everyone the tools and resources they need.

The national organization Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines trauma on their webpage “Trauma and Violence “in the following manner:

SAMHSA describes individual trauma as resulting from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (Trauma and Violence, 2017, para. 3 emphases in original).

Offenders involved in prison education systems have often experienced traumatic events in their lifetimes. It is important for the teachers who work with them to understand the dynamics of trauma – both as it manifests in the academic environment and how addressing it affects the professional.

There are very few studies focusing on the impact on teachers who work with traumatized populations. The first study of this focus, conducted by Hatcher, Bride, Oh, and King (2011) examined the development of secondary traumatic stress symptomology in teachers and staff who work with juvenile offenders. The authors explain secondary traumatic stress as a “phenomenon where staff who provide services to traumatized populations are indirectly traumatized as a result of the professional helping relationship” (p.209). They further go on to explain that while this experience has been studied in

clinical populations including substance abuse counselors, mental health professionals, social workers, child welfare personnel, domestic violence counselors and sexual assault counselors, it has not been as thoroughly or closely examined in non-clinical staff working in juvenile and adult corrections.

Many people who experience trauma develop ways to cope with and overcome the negative impact of the experiences. Liu, Reed and Girard (2017) explained research around traumatic resilience is new but the physical, social and emotional components, as identified by various theories, have been in place as long as traumatic events have occurred. Despite the challenges and negative experiences teachers in corrections encounter, they can and often are resilient. Vandewater (2014) discovered in her interview with a teacher from a correctional facility that the teacher enjoyed security of employment and state benefits which accompanied her work, which helped the teacher tolerate the challenges she faced in the prison. Reed (2013) interviewed Laura Bates who wrote *Shakespeare Saved My Life: Ten Years in Solitary with the Bard* and learned Ms. Bates felt her time as a teacher in prison allowed her to positively impact her students. Many other teachers find working in prisons to be personally and professionally fulfilling careers. However, this does not mitigate the need for continued research regarding their experiences, especially for those who teach in segregation/restrictive housing units. Indeed, continued exploration of the experiences of these people may help bring to light elements of resilience which can contribute to their profession.

While narrative accounts offer powerful illustrations of what day-to-day living is like for offenders, the day-to-day reality teachers face in correctional educational settings is often only presented in an incidental manner. For example, McCarthy, Schiraldi, and

Shark (2016) describe the experience of a 16-year old young man who is serving an 18-month sentence at the Elm Tree Correctional Facility. The young man's story includes the following description of his educational experience:

After breakfast, he and the others in his unit are lined up and moved to the school room. Class is supposed to run from 8:30 to noon, but a fight breaks out in the hallway, so classes don't start until 9:30. He hears a couple of the guys placing bets on how long this teacher will last. He has already been there a month, longer than some others. It is hard to tell when class officially gets under way, since kids keep getting into verbal — and sometimes physical — fights with other kids, staff, and teachers. Two of the guys get removed from the classroom, and he hears the officer tell one of them he's going to solitary confinement and that both of them will lose their weekly family visitation and calls. (p.8)

Obviously, this experience is detrimental to the student but what remains unaddressed is the violence the teachers witness and experiences which are described in this vignette.

Since the 1700's teachers have worked in challenging correctional educational environments, risking their physical and emotional health to educate and reform those who many in society have cast aside. The difficulty in coping with violence, such as the types described in this narrative are factors in correctional teacher turnover, professional burnout and the development of secondary traumatic stress responses (Hatcher et al., 2011). Until more research is conducted regarding the experiences of educational professionals in correctional settings, reforms involving improved training for them are essentially taking on a "cart before the horse" mentality. True reform cannot occur until all perspectives are presented and understood.

## **Education in Segregation/Restrictive Housing Unit Settings**

For as long as prisons and correctional facilities have existed in the United States, education has been part of the programming. The level of involvement education has experienced within this complex system has varied greatly depending on the societal demands, current philosophy and the economic climate. What has remained consistent for hundreds of years, is the lack of recognition of the importance of correctional education. Within correctional education circles, professionals often joke how correctional education is a neglected child of the correctional field and a bastardized child of the adult education profession (Young, 1986). Because it involves teaching the most marginalized and stigmatized members of society, correctional education exists but often goes unrecognized by the two professional fields it serves (Chlup, 2005).

While the positive impact of correctional education has been established in relation to offenders and society, research regarding teachers who deliver these services continues to be absent from major studies. Powerful words of academics accompany a bevy of statistics to support the beneficial impact of correctional educational opportunities not only for offenders but for society, yet the voices of the key stakeholders – teachers – continues to remain unheard. Little remains known about the stress of teaching in correctional facilities and the impact of attempting to juxtapose the expectations of the teaching field with the requirements of a modern day correctional facility on a teacher.

Perhaps, the most telling display of lack of understanding about the profession and dismissal of the work of the teachers serving within prison walls, especially those who teach in segregation/restrictive housing units, can be found in recent news stories. In

Minnesota, a state well known for correctional reform, one of the state's predominant newspapers, *Star Tribune* published a four-part in-depth article regarding the negative effects of segregation/restrictive housing practices on offenders in prison (Mannix, 2016). The article, published on December 4, 2016, went into detail regarding the detrimental psychological, physical and social effects long-term segregation/restrictive housing can have on an offender and used several case studies to illustrate these points. In his article, Mannix (2016) makes the following statement about offenders who are in segregation/restrictive housing: "They've been denied prison jobs, educational programming and normal visits from friends and family — all of which have been proved by Minnesota Department of Corrections studies to reduce their chances of being rearrested." This is statement shows a lack of understanding and thorough research on the part of the author, as offenders who are 21 and under and receive special education services do have education and subsequently other services provided to them even when they are in the most restrictive housing units. In these situations, teachers and other educational staff work with the offenders on the unit to attempt to help them regain the skills needed to re-enter the general population. This information could have been easily provided by contacting the Education Directors at the prisons named in the article, had the author chosen to verify his information on a deeper level.

The ramifications from the information and misinformation in articles such as the one written by Mannix in December of 2016 for the *Star Tribune* can have far reaching impacts which are both positive and negative. Based on the information (or misinformation) provided in the article, in January of 2017, Minnesota Governor Dayton proposed an additional \$7 million dollars be allotted to the Department of Corrections to



reform segregation/restrictive housing practices (Mannix, 2017) A follow article, again written by Mannix for the *Star Tribune* and published on January 26, 2017 explains the additional monies "... would fund 48 new positions over two years — including security, behavioral health and caseworker staff — to provide more out-of-cell time for prisoners, cognitive treatment and classes designed to reduce re-arrest rates." While these expenditures could certainly help offenders, no support is presented for systems already in place such as education in segregation/restrictive housing settings. Again, the work of teachers in corrections – especially those who serve segregation/restrictive housing units - is unrecognized and unsupported while still being expected to be implemented based on federal mandates such as those outlined in 2014 letter by the United States Department of Education - Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) (Musgrove & Yudin, 2015).

One population which does recognize the importance of education, is the offenders themselves. On February 1, 2017, prisoners took four (4) employees hostage at the Vaughn Correctional Center in Smyrna, Delaware. During the 15-hour siege, the offenders told negotiators "Education, we want education first and foremost" as part of their demands (Horn, Parra, & Duvernay, 2017). Given the siege has ended, unfortunately with one employee dead and several others injured, it remains to be seen if the demand for education will be considered in the investigations which follow and factor in preventative measures developed by the Delaware Department of Corrections to prevent similar tragedies in the future. Perhaps, now may be the time to realize the need for a closer examination of role education has and can have in creating and maintaining a more effective correctional system.

In 1995, Charles Figley noted in his book *Compassion Fatigue: Toward a New Understanding of the Costs of Caring*, “There is a cost to caring. Professionals who listen to clients’ stories of fear, pain and suffering may feel similar fear, pain and suffering because they care. Sometimes we feel we are losing our sense of selves to the clients we serve” (p. 1). He went on to explain this symptomology was closely aligned to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and could create long-term physical and psychological damage for those who worked with others who have been traumatized. Keinan and Malach-Pines (2007) suggest it is virtually impossible to work in a prison or correctional facility, in a position with direct contact with offenders, and not experience trauma. The impact on professionals who work with people who have experienced trauma (such as incarceration) and in potentially traumatizing environments such as prison has been established in research many times – with the exception of recognition of the impact on teachers in correctional facilities. Jonathon Messemer offers a very accurate summation of this phenomenon in his 2011 review of correctional education literature, in which he succinctly states: “Nearly all of the correctional education literature is focused upon the inmate population, whereas the researcher was not able to find empirical research that studied those who teach within the prison facilities” (p. 98).

State and federal correctional departments and agencies continue to focus on prison reform and have begun to specifically turn the spotlight on segregation/restrictive housing policies and procedures. As this occurs, state and federal agencies in education continue to call for an end to the “school-to-prison-pipeline” and assurances that students with special needs receive education and services in restrictive settings such as prisons. Many proposed changes cite meta-analysis of correctional educational programming

shows the positive outcomes for offenders who access academic and vocational training while incarcerated. Yet, none of these ideas, proposals or theories take into consideration the impact of implementation on the education professionals who are some of the major stakeholders. There is little demonstrated understanding of the personal and professional needs of those who teach in correctional settings. Reform cannot occur and be implemented with fidelity for long-term sustainability until all the parties involved are recognized and supported as equal members of the system. This study proposes to begin this process by further researching those who are at the very heart of change – teachers who work in segregation/restrictive housing units in prisons.

### Chapter 3

#### Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of teachers who work in the segregation/restrictive housing units within the prison system. Specifically, it aimed to examine the question: *How do correctional teachers' direct and vicarious experiences with trauma impact their personal and professional lives, and how can they be assisted and supported?* Because individuals experience the world based on their perceptions and interpretations (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013), a qualitative approach was used. As noted throughout the previous chapters, teachers who work in corrections, especially those who work in the segregation/restrictive housing units, have very little voice in academic research. This study was developed to bring their voices to light – to move beyond a reflection of demographic information and to examine the lived experiences of these teachers.

Phillips (2006) in Conrad and Serlin (2006) describes the importance of considering the diversity of all of those involved in educational research and inquiry. He explains it is a complex situation and emphasizes that educational researchers must not only be aware of society's social norms and values but understand how they impact educational research. Throughout their work, Conrad and Serlin (2006) advocate for the educational researcher to take the role of inquirer and to be thoughtful in their data, analysis and dissemination. They stress, for the field of education, there is rarely one correct way to research a topic. Conrad and Serlin (2006) explain there is a need to consider alternative perspectives. This study offers an alternative perspective to

correctional education by presenting descriptions of the impact of working in segregation/restrictive housing units directly from those who do so.

Fundamental to this study were the perspectives of teachers, which added richly to the educational field despite their lack of presence in formalized research. It is important to bring these voices forward in a genuine and realistic manner. The utilization of a qualitative approach allowed the participants to describe their experiences and the researcher to investigate the unique nuances of teaching in a segregation/restrictive housing unit within a prison facility.

### **Strategy of Inquiry**

The qualitative strategy used for this study was a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology has its roots in the works of Husserl and Heidegger (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013), and centers on the studying the lived experiences of people. Landridge (2007) explains phenomenology concerns itself with the meaning people derive from an experience and examines the commonalities people have when participating in a specific shared phenomenon. Further, phenomenological research involves an investigation of not only the phenomenon in its outward form, which includes objects and actions, but also “in its inward form, which includes thoughts, images, and feelings” (Savin-Baden & Major, p.215).

Due to its strong philosophical component and emphasis on “how” and “what” an individual experiences during a phenomenon, phenomenology has become widely used in the social sciences (Creswell, 2013). Sociology, psychology education and nursing are some examples of the professional fields which have benefited from phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013). As this study focuses of participants who teach in

segregation/restrictive housing units in prison, it was appropriate to select a method recognized in both the fields of sociology and education.

The questions asked in this study were deeply personal. The information gathered was beyond the capacity of a quantitative research. A phenomenological approach captured the essence of the experience these correctional teachers shared. It was this approach which allows others to understand more deeply what these teachers experienced in their professional and personal lives and how it differed from their colleagues in more traditional educational settings. The true voice of the teacher working in a segregation/restrictive housing unit in a prison came through in descriptions of information collected in one-on-one interviews.

### **Participants**

Creswell (2013) explained the focus of a phenomenological research study is on the shared experience of a group of people. It is crucial in phenomenological research participants are not only familiar with a common event and are able to be articulate about their perceptions (Carr, 2001). This type of research is personal and intimate and because of its nature, Creswell (2013) explains the optimal size is determined by the experience. The number of participants may be 3-5 or up to 10-15 (Creswell, 2013). As Hycner (1999) states, “the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants” (p. 156).

Teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units in prisons is a very specialized occupation, and thus an accessible and interested population was relatively small. In Minnesota, approximately 50 teachers work within the state prison system. There are approximately 10 teachers who are assigned to work in the segregation/restrictive

housing units in Minnesota prisons. In addition, there are several other teachers who previously worked in these units, but now are in other roles or education settings within the Minnesota Department of Corrections. With permission from the Minnesota Department of Corrections (see Appendix A) and with approval from the University of Minnesota's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B), an email was sent to these teachers and former teachers, and eight responded expressing an interest in the study (see Appendix C for the recruitment email). From these eight participants who indicated an initial interest in participating, five correctional teachers became study participants. In addition to meeting the criteria of either currently or previously teaching in a segregation/restrictive housing unit within a Minnesota correctional facility, these five also indicated a willingness to participate in the face-to-face oral interviews and were receptive to the having the findings from the study shared in the dissertation, as well as publishing or presenting the findings.

There were three teachers who initially expressed interest in participating but did not continue as study participants. They were unable to participate in a face-to-face interview due to lack of time, difficulty in discussing these experiences in person, and/or concerns about possible administrative reactions to their participation. The State Residential Education Association (SRSEA), the teachers' collective bargaining unit, was aware of this study, due to the Minnesota Department of Correction's approval for the study, and SRSEA voluntarily notified members and offered support for anyone who wanted to participate but had concerns about possible administrative reprisals. In addition, Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) resources were given to these teachers

expressing concern regarding difficulty in discussing these experiences. These three participants declined, and recruitment of them as research participants ceased.

In addition to the information in the recruitment email and the initial verbal overview of the study they received during the recruitment process, participants were provided a consent document, prior to the interview, which described the purpose of the study and outlined what participation entailed (see Appendix D). This consent document contained information regarding the potential risk of the interview triggering strong emotions. Consequently, participants also were provided with information for resources for emotional support within the consent form itself. In addition to consenting to participate in the interview, the document asked participants for their consent for having the interview audiotaped.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of a qualitative researcher is complex. There is much discussion about researchers who are members of the population being study and those who are outside of the group (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Both positions have advantages and disadvantages they bring to the research and both need to be considered in the design of a qualitative study (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The authors explain that an effective qualitative researcher does not have to be an insider or an outsider:

Instead, we posit that the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience. (Dwyer & Buckle, p. 59)



Glesne (1999) stresses the importance for a qualitative researcher to be upfront and honest with participants, remain reflexive and accept the outcomes of doing so.

I acknowledge I am a special education teacher in a correctional facility and a long-time advocate for correctional education. Additionally, I have taught juvenile, minimum, medium, maximum and supermax facilities. In these locations, I have served as a general education and special education for juvenile and adult offenders. I acknowledge that across these settings I have also taught in segregation/restrictive housing and mental health units, as well as in traditional classroom settings.

Teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units is often a solitary experience. The actual teaching is usually done in isolation of educational colleagues. The experience is not often discussed as it is not usually considered a desirable position to have in the educational hierarchy of a prison.

There are many unwritten rules for those who work in prisons and a common one is prison staff do not talk in depth about what happens in the prison to outsiders. Many prison staff – across roles – do not believe people outside the walls will truly understand their work. Having been involved in corrections education for many years, I believe, enhanced my knowledge, recognition and sensitivity to these elements of this study. It allowed me to utilize pre-existing rapport to bring forward the intricate essences of the participants' experiences. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) explain, "The benefit to being a member of the group one is studying is acceptance. One's membership automatically provides a level of trust and openness in your participants that would likely not have been present otherwise" (p.58). For the study, participants noted that it helped them to be interviewed by someone familiar with their work, as they felt they could freely use

common everyday terminology. This understanding allowed discussion about the research topic to flow unimpeded and participants were not distracted by requirements to explain minute details or elaborate on the terminology of their working environment. The interview focused on their experiences as professionals and as people, rather than on deciphering terminology or explaining certain elements of working in correctional facilities.

### **Researcher Bias and Bracketing**

Working effectively in a prison and helping offenders reform often requires a person suspend his or her personal beliefs. Doing so, involves a conscious setting aside of one's biases and personal experience to listen to an offender's narrative. If one can do so without rendering personal judgement but instead focusing on the offender's presentation of information, she or he has a better chance of helping the offender truly identify his or her areas of need.

A similar process occurs in phenomenological research. In his book on phenomenological research methods and models, Moustakas (1994) discusses the importance of Epoche which is the setting aside prejudgments and opening the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence. After many years of working in education, I have learned that I am still learning, and I always will be. Self-reflection and seeking information to improve my work are significant elements in my professional practice. As a special education teacher working specifically with 18 through 21-year-old students, the focus of my work is to help empower them to reach their own goals, and many times what they envision for their future differs from my own. It is not my place to judge them but to assist them.

Creswell (2013) states qualitative research methods such as phenomenology should be used to “... empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices and minimize the power relationships that often exist between the researcher and participants in a study” (p.48). My story is not the same as the participants in the study. I am not the same person. Just as I work to empower my students to reach their own goal, so I bracketed my own experiences to allow the voices of others to be heard. I worked with professionals in education and corrections – but not participating in this study – to monitor my biases. To add to the reflexivity of the study, I actively sought and invited participants for the study who were different from myself. I actively solicited feedback on my work and reflected on my documentation throughout all phases of the study.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected through in-depth one-on-one interviews with participants. Before the interview began, the consent document was reviewed in detail, and participants had the opportunity to ask questions prior to signing the consent form. Information regarding resources for emotional support were also provided again. All five participants selected for the study provided consent to participation and for their interviews to be audiotaped.

Interviews lasted an average of one hour. All were conducted in public places, in a place that was selected by the participant. No interviews were done during working hours or in the prisons. Given it was a contract negotiation year, some participants indicated being cautious about being interviewed within the prison itself, thus confirming the decision in the research protocol to have the interview location be a neutral place.

While this created some variability in the study, it was more important to protect research participants by having the interviews happen in a space in which they felt comfortable.

Based on the work of Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994), the participants were asked questions that were shaped by the theoretical components of phenomenology. Participants were asked to reflect on what they had experienced in terms of the phenomena (working in segregation/restrictive housing units) and what circumstances and settings may have impacted their experiences with the phenomena (working in segregation/restrictive housing units) (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Specifically, the questions in the interview asked were as follows:

- What your experience of as a correctional teacher who works in segregated/restrictive housing units? (What are your experiences currently? What experiences compel you to remain teaching in this setting and/or what experiences discourage you from remaining in this setting? What past experiences led you to teaching in this setting?)
- What is the impact of these experiences on you (personally and professionally)?
- What are your needs and/or recommendations regarding how correctional teachers could be supported toward providing effective instruction in segregated/restrictive housing units?

At times during two of the interviews, these two participants indicated they wanted to continue participating in the interview, but asked the audiotaping to be discontinued momentarily. Taping was discontinued at that point, and then resumed upon permission of the participant. These two participants consented to have their statements from during the audiotaped portion of the interview to be used in the data analysis. Any

verbal statements they provided while the tape recorder was off or paused were not considered data, nor used in the data analysis, per request by these two participants.

### **Data Analysis**

Upon completing the data collection and transcription, the data was analyzed using a method described by Moustakas (1994). The phenomenological approach described by Moustakas is a variation of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas' methodology was developed in 1990 following his self-exploration of the loneliness and isolation he felt when having to make a major medical decision regarding his child (Kenny, 2012). From his own lens as a psychologist, he developed his heuristic methodology as he explored these same feelings when experienced by others. Moustakas refined his work to develop a framework for researchers to collect and analyze data holistically (Kenny, 2012; Moustakas 1994). For this study, incorporating this methodology allowed the full experiences of the participants immersed in the phenomena of teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units to be explored in relation to the research questions.

In this approach the first step involved noting all statements that related to a participant's experiences, otherwise known as horizontalization. Horizontalization considers all information, data, and statements to have meaning to a researcher. Explicitly, then, no statement is considered more important than any other and all statements are elements of participants' experience and that of the researcher (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Following this process of horizontalization, I created a list of all non-repetitive statements from the data given by participants. For each statement, as guided by Moustakas (1994) and Eddles-Hirsch (2015), the following two questions were asked: 1) Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it? 2) Is it possible to abstract and label it? The horizons that met these requirements then became known as the invariant constituents of the experience for each of the participants. Consequently, the invariant horizons provided the living description

of the experience (Moustakas, 1994), and in this particular study, this experience was centered on teacher-student-context that frames that educational process within a state prison system. The identification of the invariant horizons allowed for data (statements) to be grouped into themes and these are directly related to the research questions asked of the participants (Blackstock, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Hycner 1999; Moustakas, 1994). Following the development of the themes, they were combined with the invariant horizons to create a rich, personalized textural description of each participant's experience (Moustakas, 1994). Verbatim examples were used to demonstrate each individual's experience.

Individual textural descriptions and imaginative variation constructed the individual descriptions of the experiences of each participant (Moustakas, 1994). The textural-structural description of the essential core meanings of each participant's experience were developed from identified invariant constituents and themes (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The final process in analyzing the data consisted of developing a composite description utilizing all of the individuals' textural-structural descriptions. This composite description helps to explain how circumstances and settings impact participants' experiences of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). As Blackstock (2016) describes, "This narrative attempts to blend and illustrate how the textural and structural components are intermingled within the data. It becomes a full integration of the conscious-level themes and the subconscious framework of experience" (p. 6-7).

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings and Analysis of the Lived Experiences of Teachers in Segregation/Restrictive Housing Units**

This study examined the impact of working in segregation/restrictive housing units within Minnesota minimum, medium, maximum and supermax prisons has on the professional and personal lives of teachers. To understand these lived experiences, this project employed a phenomenological methodology to analyze the findings and help the author and reader to understand "how the everyday, inter-subjective world is constituted" (Schwandt, 2000) through the lens of the participant. The participants' experiences and voices were central to this project and essential, for as Husserl (1970) has noted, "we can only know what we experience," and the experiences of these teachers provided profound insights into an educational context and professional journey is significant social and psychological consequence.

The data from five in-depth interviews provide the basis for this chapter. A general description of the participants is presented prior to analysis. Due to the sensitive nature of both the work environment and the questions asked, participants were assigned the numbers one through five to encode their identity and provide a necessary protection for their anonymity. For the purposes of this study, specific details that would personally identify the participants were omitted.

The analysis of the in-depth interviews revealed four key themes that were identified as being central to the experiences of teachers working in the

segregation/restrictive housing units within the Minnesota prison system. These themes suggest how the lived experiences of teachers working in segregation/restrictive housing units in a prison impact them, personally and professionally, in profound ways and provide the reader with insight into the complexity and impacts of educational efforts with the incarcerated. Direct quotes from the narratives of participants help illuminate their experiences with the phenomena of providing education by developing a professional student-teacher relationship with offenders incarcerated in segregation/restrictive housing unit. The key themes that emerged from the interviews were as follows: (a) teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units impacts personal relationships; (b) the correctional setting encourages a lack of recognition of the teaching professional; (c) segregation/restrictive housing units require teachers to work in a unique manner; (d) teachers who work in segregation/restrictive housing units must be resilient.

### **Participants**

This study included five teachers who were working for the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC). All teachers held a current Minnesota state teaching license. Each participant had earned a minimum of a bachelor's degree and all had worked in public school systems prior to being employed by the DOC. The participants were currently employed as teachers with the DOC at the time of the study. Their length of experience with the DOC ranged from five years or less to more than 10 years. The participants described differing families of origin, such as traditional nuclear families, blended families and families dealing with issues such as physical and chemical abuse.

Participant 1 was currently working as a teacher in the prison system and his duties include working in segregation/restrictive housing units. He had over 10 years of



experience working for the DOC. Participant 1 had worked in multiple roles for the DOC. Participant 2 also had over 10 years of experience working for the DOC. He brought experience from teaching in public schools and other correctional settings to his job at the DOC. Participant 3 began working at the DOC over 10 years ago and had worked in the segregation/restrictive housing units since beginning in his position. Participant 4 had worked fewer than 5 years for the DOC and regularly taught in segregation/restrictive housing. Participant 5 joined the DOC as a teacher over 10 years ago and also regularly taught in segregation/restrictive housing. His prior professional background was working in therapeutic settings.

### **Key Themes**

**Theme 1: Teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units impacts personal relationships.** In this theme, participants identified their work teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units as impacting personal relationships they have with others. Subthemes which surfaced in relation to this theme included: strains on personal relationships, conflicts with loved ones, separation, divorce and inability to communicate about work with people in their personal lives. The interview questions (see Chapter 3) were crafted to promote conversation focused on the lived experiences of teachers working in segregation/restrictive housing units within a prison. Questions were asked of participants regarding how they felt their experiences, specifically as a DOC teacher working in segregation/restrictive housing, impacted relationships with friends and family members. All participants described some level of impact the work had or continues to have on their life outside of the prison walls. One participant said, “How is this impacting me professionally, personally? Divorce and separation ... therapy.”

While all the teachers expressed feeling teaching in segregation/restrictive housing impacted their relationships in their personal lives, several discussed trying to shield loved ones from hearing or learning about the true nature of their work. Some teachers spoke of not wanting people they cared for to worry or be concerned for them during their working hours. Additionally, they discussed not wanting to share details of experiences that the teachers considered to be violent or grossly unpleasant. One teacher explained how he kept from discussing work at home:

My wife rarely will ask me, "How was work?" When I walk out that door, it's done. And she'll know if there's something I want to talk about, I'll talk about it, but it's very, very rare that I bring anything home from work. She doesn't need to know some of the stuff that goes on. And it's not as bad as it used to be, it used to be pretty bizarre and weird stuff.

As participants shared stories of the interactions they experienced teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units, they often spoke of occurrences which they felt others would have a difficult time understanding or comprehending. The teachers who were interviewed shared how they felt people who heard about their work may view them differently as teaching professionals if they knew the reality of working in these specific educational settings. One participant captured this sentiment by explaining how people who do not work in prison settings have reacted when he has attempted to discuss his work with them:

Sometimes, people are like, "Wow, that's insane. How do you deal with insanity like that?" And it's like, "Well, it's what happens," but I don't know, part of you shuts down.

The participants spoke about how even within teaching staff at the DOC, being assigned to work in segregation/restrictive housing units can affect relationships with co-workers and create a reluctance to share experiences. In describing interacting with other DOC teachers at professional conferences, one of the study participants stated:

I never talk about work at home. Never. And when we all get together at, like, or some other institute. When we go out, I don't want to talk about work.

Many times, during the interview process, the teachers would look down or away from me as they were describing the impact of their work in segregation/restrictive housing units on their personal lives. Participants would often pause and attempt to search for wording as they described the impact of events which occurred on the job that they did not feel could be shared with others outside of prison. Twice, as this theme emerged, interviews were stopped at the request of the participants to allow them time for emotional recovery. Interviews resumed with their permission. It is important to note, even knowing they were speaking to someone who was familiar with teaching inside prison segregation/restrictive housing units, participants felt the need to apologize and explain the reason for requesting the interview be stopped at that time.

The body language on the participants, such as looking away from the interviewer, lowering voices and staring into space while discussing the impact of teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units were indicative of an attempt to emotionally separate themselves from the topic and discussion directly pertaining to it. At times, it seemed participants were enacting the mantra of not discussing their work outside of work, and also that they were trying to compartmentalize their work experiences to prevent them from being an integrated part of their personal identity. The

overarching theme seemed to be “what happens in the prison, stays in the prison,” and very few of the participants overtly described outlets they accessed specifically for discussing working in segregation/restrictive housing units.

**Theme 2: The correctional setting encourages a lack of recognition of the teaching professional.** This second theme became evident as participants were asked regarding the barriers they encountered teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units. Subthemes in relation to the main theme were perceptions of being unsupported by non-teaching staff and a lack of understanding of the role of a teacher within the segregation restrictive housing units. Participants in the study repeatedly spoke about feeling isolated – both physically and professionally especially while working in the segregation/restrictive housing units. This feeling of isolation stemmed from often being the only staff person in a large facility who was doing this form of very specialized work.

Unlike the camaraderie which many school teachers develop with colleagues in K-12 systems as they address educational issues, teachers in segregation/restrictive housing units are often left to their own devices – especially when dealing with problems specific to this work. Participants described cohesive bonds with co-workers regarding general correctional educational topics or institutional procedures but found it difficult to find others who could or would relate specifically to working as a teacher in segregation/restrictive housing units. Being assigned to work in segregation/restrictive housing units was not identified by participants as being a highly coveted position in correctional education. Most of the participants felt it was difficult to be a teacher in institutional framework that did not primarily endorse teaching and learning, but was governed by the ideals of physical safety and security.

An additional subtheme was the feeling of frustration teachers felt in attempting to navigate a highly complex safety and security process in segregation/restrictive housing units while simultaneously trying to do their jobs. When asked to elaborate on feelings of frustration, many of the participants explained they were often repeatedly questioned about their roles and intentions in their work in segregation/restrictive housing units by correctional officers. Several teachers described believing they were hired as professionals, but not always being treated as professionals when they arrived to work in segregation/restrictive housing units. Several participants provided examples where they felt they had to justify the professional work they were hired to do to correctional officers who were not involved in educational programming for offenders. This constant questioning left some participants questioning their role within the institution. Already in an environment foreign to a teacher coming from the K-12 system, without colleagues to share experiences and identify with, this created a further sense of alienation in some participants.

Every teacher interviewed indicated they were aware of the need for safety and security in their work, but the majority described a lack of reciprocity for non-uniform staff to understand the nature of the teacher's work. One participant elaborated on how correctional staff reacts when he enters to unit to teach and carry out his professional duties:

The reactions you get are different depending on who you're dealing with. The reactions from staff are more of shock and awe that a teacher's coming back here, and they don't really understand what the purpose of a teacher is coming back there.... "Why are you back here?" "What? You're back here? I don't understand

why you're back here." "Do you need to be back here right now? I'm busy. It's almost a shift change." "Okay. I'll call back." You call back. "It doesn't work right now."

As the interviews proceeded, the teachers spoke about how not being a correctional officer or other uniformed staff often left them feeling like an outsider or intruder when they were working in segregation/restrictive housing units. This perception is highlighted by this commentary:

Actually, right now, they have a—segregation officers have kind of a group of them. So, it's actually harder to become—as a guy looking from the outside, it's harder to become part of that group or clique in the segregation unit for a new person.... Because, yeah, some teachers have had some difficulty working over in seg if they aren't, well, liked by that group of officers. If you're the odd man out, it just doesn't feel right. It makes you feel unsafe, but I don't think that any of the officers there would ever neglect their duty. But it makes you feel unsafe when you don't know the person you're working with and you're in a volatile situation.

Participants described situations in segregation/restrictive housing units where the expectation was conformity to policies and procedures but without explanation of the details of all the logistics. All participants described a low tolerance in segregation/restrictive housing units for errors or perceived mistakes made by staff. Yet, without training in policies and procedures, mistakes are bound to occur. This ambiguity, lack of training, and absence of recognition of the role of the teacher in segregation/restrictive housing units, left some participants struggling to continue to find

a professional identity and move forward in their work. To further explain the impact of this, a participant shared the following experience:

I done said something I wasn't supposed to say. Oh. That is like the most rookiest [sic] stupid thing I did. I just ruined a whole bunch of people's day. I messed up bad.... then people talk behind your back and say, "This fuckin' idiot just said a whole bunch of things. Who the hell is this idiot?" And word gets around that you did those things and you don't get anything credibility wise as far as you're actually competent. It's like, "Okay, who's this incompetent idiot?" Now you're known as the incompetent idiot. Okay, so now I know I'm an incompetent idiot. Now I know not to say things. You learn from your mistakes and you learn quickly. But you don't feel like you want to go back anymore, but you've got to because it's your job, so you go there with your tail between your legs and you try to like, well, you've got to do it, got to do it again.

Each of the participants in the study described positive interactions with segregation/restrictive housing staff as being important in internal and external recognition of their roles as professionals in the prison setting. All stressed it was important to them personally and professionally to be acknowledged as being part of a team. When participants were asked what helped them continue to work in segregation/restrictive housing units, they identified a sense of being a team member as a core component. A teacher in the study smiled as he said: "And then, having friendly officers helps greatly, you know the ones that are willing to go out of their way, understand and assist you, instead of just watch you." Another teacher nodded in

affirmation as he commented on the benefits of having a positive working relationship with correctional officers:

There's officers that are like, "I'm glad to see you every day." And I know, and I've seen them do things where I'm like, "Wow, you do a great job and you were making sure I was safe." And you go, "No, thank you so much for what you do."

While the teachers expressed concerns and frustrations over the lack of recognition regarding their roles within the prison system as whole and segregation/restrictive housing units, most of them acknowledged development of a professional relationship was a dualistic process. One participant described open and honest communication as being key to him being finally recognized as professional. He elaborated:

“So, I got a lot of kickback from them. So finally, I just went up and said, I told them up there in the segregation unit. I'm like, look, here's the deal. What's the problem? You know, we don't, because I have a lot of attention to what's going on. And it was really just about challenging some of that stuff. And then making myself available to ask for them to ask questions of.”

A sense of safety and belonging are basic essential human needs. While teaching in high risk settings, it is crucial for the teacher to have a strong professional identity and presence. As one teacher noted, “I had to learn that there were rules. Then, I had to be comfortable and consistent in enforcing those rules.” As the other participants echoed, this comfort and consistency does not come unless teachers not only understand their role but are also supported by others in carrying out their duties.

Teachers working within segregation/restrictive housing units are caught in education limbo. The participants in this study described working in a setting which is



cold, impersonal, sterile and focused solely on safety and security. In this unwelcoming environment, teachers are expected to establish rapport and develop a professional relationship which engages offenders as students. The teachers in this study knew they had to find a way to accomplish this herculean task if they are to see students move forward in the curriculum. All the participants spoke about wanting to see their students succeed and how difficult it was to accept the inherent limitations segregation/restrictive housing created on the creation of an effective educational environment.

The need for strict professional boundaries to mitigate criminal behaviors and attempts at manipulation engaged in by their students made it difficult for some teachers in this to express care and compassion directly to their students. Most teachers, by nature, have a desire to help others. In segregation/restrictive housing, this tendency, which often seen a strength in other educational venues, must be carefully monitored to avoid it being exploited by offenders. For some of the participants in this study, this created professional incongruity and left them trying to determine if they were a teacher, security staff or both. For all participants, it was clear after working in the DOC they shed the professional persona they may have developed in a K-12 system, as it was necessary to do so to continue their career in corrections.

**Theme 3: Segregation/restrictive housing units require teachers to work in a unique manner.** During the interview process, participants described in detail the unique nuances and processes of working in segregation/restrictive housing units and from these conversations emerged this third theme. Subthemes within this theme include the additional physical and tangible tasks teachers must do simply to gain access to their work spaces and the isolation of the setting. These subthemes and overarching key theme

have some overlap with the first theme identified in this study, as they demonstrate the impact of this educational setting on the teacher's mindset and thought processes.

The narratives show how teachers in segregation/restrictive housing units must think beyond academic subject matter and be aware of all the elements of this highly specialized population. Their words show how teachers in segregation/restrictive housing units must always be aware of the juxtaposition of educational ideology and security practices. One teacher described the uniqueness of teaching in segregation/restrictive housing by saying, "I used to think it was organized chaos. Now it's kind of structured chaos with intended restrictions."

Because segregation/restrictive housing units revolve entirely around safety and security, intense attention is on every interaction with an offender. Teachers described how everything element of their practice is scrutinized, even down to the minutia of instruction. This best illustrated by this comment describing what materials cannot and cannot be brought into a segregation/restrictive housing unit, "When we hand out assignments, no staples. No hardcover books —could be softcover books, but it has to be a glue-back binding. They can only write with a seg-issued pen."

In addition to being mindful of overall safety and security procedures, teaching staff also described having to set hard and fast boundaries regarding behavior and appearance. Several teachers described incidents where students were in stages of undress or naked when teachers arrived to deliver instruction. One participant reflected on his experiences with this issue: "Up until [specific staff] came along, there was no dress code for them. I frequently would work with a man shirtless—sometimes I think they were pantless. I never bothered to look down." Participants shared hypotheses on why

offenders would be in stages of undress or nude during educational instruction. In certain situations, it was believed to have been a manifestation of mental illness or at other times it may have been an attempt to shock the teacher and express defiance. Most of the participants described having to address nudity in the course of attempting to instruct in this setting and stated this was not an issue they had encountered prior to coming to the DOC.

A phenomenon found in segregation/restrictive housing that was unique and also impactful for participants was when they encountered a student who was placed in restraints to facilitate an educational process. This process was initially very foreign to teachers who had been trained in their professional licensure coursework to develop rapport and create welcoming environments for students in an effort to foster student engagement. One of the study participants reflected on a special education meeting which was conducted in segregation/restrictive housing and how the barriers of physical restraint impacted the outcome:

[I] had to do an Individualized Education Plan [IEP] meeting in segregation in a staff office area. It couldn't be in one of those visiting little bubbles, because it had to have a phone. Because the SPED [Special Education] director couldn't make it there that day, we had to do a phone IEP - the supervisor and myself and the student and the SPED director. The guy was in waist chains, ankle chains, hand restraints, and they were all chained together. You had to hold the phone to his ear. It wasn't a speaker phone system. Holding it for the entire 45-minute meeting. Student held, [staff name] talked, supervisor talked, everyone talked to [offender]. You couldn't hear what was being said.

Another participant spoke about the emotional impact of meeting with a student who was physically restrained during the session. This teacher had not been prepared to see his student in this manner and he identified the experience as being very impactful for him and elicited strong memories about the first time he realized the power differential inherent between staff and offenders within a correctional facility.

He was extremely happy to see me, but I was intimidated by all of the stuff there. I had to appear confident in front of him, like I knew how everything was going. When I saw him come in, they shackled him. They brought him, shackled him, put him in there. They're shackled to the table.... when I saw him shackled it's different. I'm kind of used to it, but I'm seeing it from different eyes. I'm the one trying to help, so it's different. But I also saw, like, how can I help? I'm in a position of power.

Within a correctional facility, all staff are viewed as being in a position of power over offenders. Because all aspects of their lives are tightly controlled, offenders are considered by the DOC and other entities to be a vulnerable population. Teachers, like other staff, have authority over offenders. The participants in this study recognized this position and several, like the participant cited, described wanting to use their power to help their students. While the teachers in this study did not wield the same power as many of their non-educational colleagues, they did describe being able to make professional decisions regarding recommendation for disciplinary action and having input into some living unit decisions. Even though the power they may have had was limited, all participants expressed making thoughtful choices about their decisions which would directly impact an offender.

In addition to attempting to implement standardized educational procedures in an atypical setting, the physical space of segregation/restrictive housing units was noted to impact the teachers in the study. Each participant demonstrated understanding the inherent purpose of segregation/restrictive housing was to create a feeling of isolation and separation. However, for teachers the environment was so different from general education or correctional classrooms it left memorable impressions. All of the participants had not been trained professionally or on-the-job to specifically teach in segregation/restrictive housing units and most identified being thrust into such a different environment without support was initially intimidating. The elements of alienation and feeling alone are captured in one participant's vivid description of entering the segregation/restrictive housing unit and stand in stark contrast to experiences most teachers have when entering a school or classroom:

But then you know you go through, you get buzzed into the first set [of doors], and then there's the next set [of doors], you have to wait. So, you get buzzed in, and after that, after you get through the first one you're like, "Okay. I'm not going to be getting out of here without somebody's help." And if you're kind of claustrophobic or whatever, it kind of started setting in that there is no way out for me until the bubble lets me out. And they now have it, which I'm not as fond of even as a staff. But they don't have the one-way mirror-based clean bubble. You can't see a person anymore. So, it's like you're— [alone]. And you know that they're right over here, but you can't see anybody or interact with them. So, you're kind of like looking to the camera going, "Hey, I'm here," ... That one-way mirror, where you're just looking at this black glass basically and you can't see who's on

the other side of the bubble. It bothers me. And then you go up there and, "Can I have a school schedule?" And then they'll slide out a piece of paper....

Sometimes, yeah, there's nobody in the pod, and you're kind of looking around going, "Okay, so I'm the only one here."

The participant continued to elaborate in great detail on how the physical environment triggered feelings of concern, questions of personal safety and a deep sense of isolation. The combination of all these factors and lack of visible support created a highly stressful situation as richly illustrated in his narrative:

Some days, you're like, "Is the person going to be smearing feces on the wall?" I don't want to have urine thrown at me. No one wants that stuff, and you're just going, "Is this the day that I'm going to get hit? Is this the day that somebody's going to do something stupid?" And it puts a lot of stress on you where you're like—you hear the little buzzer thing go off of the ICS [Incident Command System], and you're like, "Oh, no." It's like, "Now I'm trapped. Well—" and that's the other thing, now I'm trapped over here. Until they calm this down and they can get me out, I am now stuck here. Kind of like, "Well, this is not cool." Especially, that's one of those things for me. I like my freedom to a degree where I can go, "Hey, I could leave." It's like, "But now, I can't." It's like, "I can't leave." It's just not a good thing when you got three [offenders] in your little classroom that's locked away, and you know that they're administering irritant over there. So, what would be the response time if those three [offenders] came at you?

Within the nature of most teachers is a strong desire to help and assist students.

The profession is one which encourages its members to have a sense of empathy and

compassion for those they educate. These professional beliefs can create a sense of cognitive dissonance when teachers work in prisons. Although the participants in this study were teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units which was often home to offenders who were violent, assaultive and dangerous all of the teachers in the study expressed concern about how students functioned in this setting. This narrative presented by one of the participants highlights the compassion he felt even as an offender was acting out:

I can feel their pain through the door. I can. You know, we're isolating people, and it's counterproductive. And to just go up there, I've got [offenders] that are trying to commit suicide and doing some of these things, and I go up there because people are like, hey, [the offender] wants to talk with you. This one [offender] that was in there was trying to [commit suicide]. Highly worked over. Highly mentally ill. The way that people are dealing with [the offender] is so counterintuitive. It's counterproductive. And [the offender] handcuffed to a table, and in a suicide gown. And we're trying to talk to [the offender], and all the sudden [the offender] starts screaming bloody murder. Chills went up and down my back. I looked over at the other individual. And we never said a word. We just sat there with her. We didn't react to it. Most people would run away, they'd call an aide over to do something. We just sat there. And we told [the offender], look. We're here. And our parting shot is always, whenever we leave, is always something positive. Look. You're going to do this, then we're going to do this together.

Another participant shared his concerns about wanting his students to academically progress despite the conditions they faced in the setting or the student's attitude toward receiving educational services, "You know, it's just a very difficult environment.... Everything slows way down, it's really hard to get to curriculum and progress—no matter how hard I try to keep these guys caught up, you just can't do that."

Despite hours of conversation, none of the participants described any training, debriefing or specialized support provided to them regarding the cognitive dissonance they may experience while trying to be a teacher inside of a prison. The teachers in the study recognize because of their professional training they experience and process potentially traumatic situations differently. This can be noted in a participant's discussion of managing a classroom in segregation/restrictive housing, while a serious physical assault was happening to a correctional officer a few doors away. The teacher could hear the entire series of events unfold over his radio:

And I think that's probably one of the things that impacted me the most was when we had one of the officers that really got nailed over there really bad. And he was out with a brain injury for three months. And the comments that some of the kids made in my classroom, all of it. Like, "I hope they got his ass," and saying stuff about wishing that person harm. And yet you're sitting there confronting it and going, "Listen, I'm going to write you up and you just stay seated. Can you do that?" But then you're going, "Well, okay, I'm not going to push this really hard because there's a serious incident going on right behind me," three locked doors away, and I don't know if there's going to be a response. You could hear it over the radio, there was a problem. You couldn't see anything, but you could hear,



“Officer—Officer down!” It's like, "Chemical irritant, A Team assemble, resident—" because he hit him with the door. That one was a traumatic one, and a lot of people were very upset.

Despite the challenges teaching in segregation/restrictive housing presented to teachers, all the participants continued to express feeling that they were helping offenders by delivering educational services in these settings. The participants identified helpful correctional officers, supportive co-workers and stable correctional and educational administration as being important in overcoming barriers faced in their unique working environment. It was noted, by all participants, the more outward assistance and support a teacher in segregation/restrictive housing received, the easier it became to adapt to their environment.

**Theme 4: Teachers who work in segregation/restrictive housing units must be resilient.** Participants teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units described immersion in environments which are ripe for the development of both Corrections Fatigue (Denhof et al., 2014) and Compassion Fatigue (Figley, 1995). All the participants in the study described the stress and impact of teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units on them as people and professions. Yet, despite the feeling of isolation, questioning of professionalism and direct and indirect encounters with traumatizing experiences, they continually demonstrated resiliency. During their interviews, participants described the ability to adapt and to recover from difficult situations. In all their narratives can be found words of hope, positive reflection on their profession and the continuing desire to help others even in the darkest places of education. One teacher enthusiastically stated during

his interview, “The challenge—I like it!” another replied, “It's a great job when you see the rewards.”

The resiliencies of the participants of this study differ from their peers working in in K-12 systems. While teachers in K-12 systems may face difficult issues such as student poverty or lack of resources, they are more readily able to access the intrinsic resources found in having many co-workers addressing the same problems within their district, state and country. Teachers in segregation/restrictive housing units do not have access to such a large support system. They only work with students who have criminal backgrounds and the academic setting is a far cry from a traditional classroom. Despite these barriers, and others, such as being unable to utilize even basic school supplies in their work, teachers in segregation/restrictive housing units find meaning and purpose in their work. Even without recognition from co-workers, these teachers know the work they do is important and impacts their students on multiple levels – they strive to move forward.

One study participant described using the challenges of the teaching environment in segregation/restrictive housing to improve his professional skills. As he said:

Seg has really helped me be more calm [*sic*] and laid back and relaxed. You just have to go with it, and if you're going to get caught in a bubble and you're going to sit there for five minutes, no sense in getting angry or frustrated or whatever. It's helped me just become more laid back. I don't want to say not taking my job so serious but [I] take it serious in a different way I guess. I realize that in corrections, we have time, lots of time, so it's helped me to be more patient.

For another participant, he developed resiliency through being able to help people move forward with their lives. Smiling, he emphatically described how working segregation/restrictive housing units had intrinsic value for him:

And when I come here, I'm here to try and, not for my needs, but for their needs. Even though I get fulfilled by doing that kind of work, I'm not there for any other reason. My job is to make sure that when you leave my classroom, that you leave better than when you came in. And I would say the majority of the time that happens. So that's rewarding for me. Is to be able to show people that, you know what? If I say something, I'm going to do that. And you can act up all you want, and I'm not going anywhere, because I'm the stubborn son of a bitch that actually cares about people.

Throughout all of the discussions and interviews, teachers described themselves as “wanting to come back” or “going back” even after the most difficult incidents occurred. A deep sense of commitment to the education profession and strong belief in the power of education were described by participants and analyzed to be the foundational building blocks for personal resiliency. One participant in the study stated he told his students about his commitment to boot his own inner strength. He stated he tells them, “You're going to do it. I'm going to push you. You will do it ... I need to make sure that you understand how committed I am to you [achieving success].”

Mental and emotional preparation were identified by the participants as being key to handling the stress of teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units. This was described by one teacher who explained further about the need to be flexible. He

describes his mindset as follows, “I think it’s that thing about going up into seg, and not necessarily having a specific path. It’s super adaptive. And treating people like people, and not going in there with your best interest in mind.”

Throughout the interviews, the participants were reflective not only on their experiences but how the delivery of education in segregation/restrictive housing units could be expanded and improved to both improve services and build resiliency in the staff who work in that setting. While all participants expressed feeling their work was important and helpful to offenders, they also recognized limitations existed. The narratives identified limitations not only in current practices but also in teacher preparation. Improved overall teacher preparation was identified as a subtheme within this key theme and as necessary for teachers to develop the confidence needed to become resilient. As one staff succinctly stated, “And that when you show up to work, you have to have a whole bag full of tricks. Different ways that you can approach different people. And it’s still fair and firmly consistent. That’s hard.”

Farther in his interview, this teacher described a process his supervisor had involved him in which he found to be both helpful in the delivery of services and professionally empowering. He felt involvement in a multidisciplinary team care conference to work with a complex offender who had multiple mental health issues helped build his resiliency for working in segregation/restrictive housing and gave him professional recognition from other co-workers outside of the education department. His narrative provides the details to further illustrate these points:

I’ve been fortunate now that my supervisor, [staff name], has been gone a few times when there’s been care conferences. And I’ve been able to sit in. I found

them extremely empowering. Especially when I say things, and people will go, oh, yeah. I never looked at shit like that. So, I think having that teacher on these teams to have a voice helps.

Building relationships with staff was an additional element of resiliency identified by several of the participants. All of the teachers in the study acknowledge the hard work of their correctional co-workers. One teacher made the following suggestions for increasing a teacher's confidence to become resilient while working in segregation/restrictive housing:

I would go back first with the intention of meeting all the staff and form relationships with them. Try to follow someone who's done it before, so you don't make all the mistakes that they did, if you have that option. If not, start slow. Don't expect to change the world in a day. Play within the rules of whoever is running seg, even if you don't agree with it at first.

Some participants noted further development of resiliency would be enhanced by training for teachers which was specifically applicable to working in segregation/restrictive housing units. A participant made the following suggestion, "I think for teachers that are going to be doing the segregation thing and about needs, I think they need to have some trauma training, not for just themselves, but for understanding the guys." Another participant noted training should not just be for teachers but about teachers as well. His statements echo the idea expressed by several participants in the study of how increased understanding of teachers by other staff would lead to improved support for teachers, which in turn would help them build personal and professional resiliency. He said, "I think the thing where they fall down in the DOC Academy is they

don't talk about disabilities or education very much. They just don't talk about it. They could probably use a teacher teaching some of that.”

It can be noted from the narratives provided the responses of the participants recognized the need for additional theoretical and procedural training for teachers who are assigned to segregation/restrictive housing units. Additionally, several participants explicitly and implicitly brought forward the need for training of correctional staff on educational pedagogy, law and practices. The ability to understand the needs which need to be addressed to decrease stress is an important step in developing and maintaining personal and professional resiliency (Rajan-Rankin, 2014). In the words of one participant towards the end of his interview for the study:

I think when you're working in corrections, you have to be secure and confident in who you are. Because if you're not, that's when that not knowing what your boundaries are? That's when that stuff kind of gets in trouble. But if you're safe and secure in who you are, and confident, people read that.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The implications from this study stem from the data collected for this study, which support the uniqueness of teaching in a segregation/restrictive housing unit within a correctional facility. The findings reinforce the need for further understanding, exploration, and research regarding this teaching experience.

The utilization of phenomenological methodology allowed for the collection of rich narratives which provided insight into the lived experiences of teachers working in this setting. In one of the few studies of teachers in prison, Messemer (2011) described the work of teachers in a prison and included recommendations for further studies focusing on the teachers' perspectives of working in this environment. Following his suggestion, this study brought those stories forward in vivid detail.

These details indicate teachers who provide educational services in segregation/restrictive housing units have compassion and care for their students – even those they teach in the bleakest of settings. This care and compassion, which intrinsically motivates them teach, also puts them at risk for Corrections Fatigue (Denhof et al., 2014) and Compassion Fatigue (Figley, 1995). Stories of professional isolation and lack of professional recognition show the work environment has the potential to exacerbate these risk factors.

While the heightened risk for both Corrections Fatigue and Compassion Fatigue is present, narratives in this study also provided insight into components of resiliency (Liu, Reed & Girard, 2017) participants have internalized. As noted in the 2007 work of

Keinan and Malach-Pines, staff who work in prisons almost inevitably experience a traumatic event. Data collected during the interviews for this study show this is true for teachers in segregation/restrictive housing units. However, unlike their uniformed co-workers, teachers are not relieved from their positions at pre-determined intervals (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2016). Despite this, multiple participants in the study – all of whom had spent several years providing educational services in segregation/restrictive housing units – found positive elements of their work and expressed desire to continue doing it. Additionally, the participants in this study seem to be motivated to continue their work as a result of assistance they received from others during difficult life events that occurred prior to teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units.

The uniqueness of the teaching environment found in segregation/restrictive housing units as described by participants in this study gives validity to the 2002 work of Gehring and Hollingsworth, especially regarding the open disdain and disrespect teachers may encounter by some of their co-workers. The narratives of participants described the complexity of navigating the segregation/restrictive housing units and learning the written and unwritten rules of doing so parallels the stages of the quest for professional identity described by Wright (2005). Even given these obstacles, participants shared stories of respect for the work of their co-workers and a deep desire to partner with others to enhance the safety and security of the prison, in addition to the respect, care, and compassion they have for their students.

## **Recommendations and Conclusions**



As incarceration rates have risen in the United States (Carson, 2015; Executive Office of the President, 2016), calls for reform have come from many different sectors of society. These cries for reform have resulted in increased scrutiny on the practice of the utilization of segregation/restrictive housing units. This scrutiny has led to a review of all the components of segregation/restrictive housing units, including educational practices, which occur in this setting (Musgrove & Yudin, 2015). While much attention has been given to the offenders and the correctional officers in these places, little information has been gathered or analyzed regarding the teachers who provide educational services in segregation/restrictive housing units (Messemer, 2011). This oversight is unfortunate, as education has been a long-standing partner in the prison system. Education in some form has present since the inception of the correctional system in the United States. Teachers have been working with offenders at all levels of incarceration for hundreds of years yet remain woefully underrepresented in educational and correctional studies. Despite this lack of recognition and voice, teachers have persevered in prison settings and education has been shown to reduce recidivism and to prepare offenders for increased chances of successful community re-entry (Davis et al., 2014).

As the narratives in this study illustrate, those who teach in segregation/restrictive housing units are often underutilized and unrecognized for their professional abilities. They are often not viewed as equals to other correctional staff and the nature of their work is sometimes misunderstood or not appreciated by those outside education. Addressing this inequality is absent in the day-to-day operations of the prison and in the literature emphasizing the need for correctional employee self-care (Denhof et al., 2014; Finney et al., 2013; Triplett et al., 1996). Despite this, teachers in segregation/restrictive

housing units find value in their work with offenders and continue to try to reach out and partner with their colleagues in the prison to improve safety and security for all. There is much work which remains to be done to help facilitate education in segregation/restrictive housing units achieve its full potential.

Based on the powerful narratives shared by participants in this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

**Increased study of teachers working in segregation/restrictive housing units.**

As education is increasingly been utilized as an intervention within segregation/restrictive housing units, it will be important to have increased understanding of the stakeholders who are directly involved in the delivery of services. Further analysis of a larger sample of teachers in this setting will be helpful in both identifying areas of need and supporting factors which support the development of resiliency. Additional studies focused on specific demographic information such as gender, race, culture and years of experience would offer valuable insight into how teachers in corrections process experiences such as those encountered in segregation/restrictive housing units. This information would be helpful in developing and implementing effective professional development opportunities to assist this population.

**Provision of all correctional staff training in basic educational theory and practice.** It has been noted in the literature that teachers who work in prisons are often under prepared (Gagnon et al., 2012). While this bears out in the narratives presented, there is also a need for other staff who work in corrections to have increased awareness of the necessity and impact of education within the prison system. Reciprocal training could be offered within the framework of academies or orientations which all employees must

attend prior to beginning employment. By implementing dualistic training, the visibility of teachers as active correctional team members is increased which will decrease perceptions of isolation. Teaching other correctional staff about the role of education will also aid in professional assimilation and support the development of mutual respect among all parties working with the same offender population.

**Increasing the availability of training and preparation in trauma-informed practices and self-care resources.** It is recognized that staff who work in corrections will most likely face a traumatic incident in the course of their work. The literature and previous research indicate such encounters create risk for the development of Corrections Fatigue. Because of the nature of the helping profession they work in, teachers in segregation/restrictive housing units are also at risk for Compassion Fatigue as well. To fully prepare teachers to deliver educational services on segregation/restrictive housing units, they should be well-trained in trauma-informed practices prior to their assignment to that location. Additional trauma-informed training should be provided on an on-going basis. Teachers in this setting should be provided with opportunities and resources for self-care which are specific to their profession. Policies regarding the length of time a teacher works in segregation/restrictive housing units should be reviewed with stakeholders involved and adjusted as necessary.

**Further efforts should be made to understand how teachers develop their professional identities.** Most teachers working in K-12 systems and/or Adult Basic Education settings incorporate their professional identity into their personal lives. The participants in this study indicated they compartmentalize their professional lives and actively seek to keep it separate from their personal relationships. The participants also

identified feeling isolated while working in their environment. This supports findings in literature (Gagnon et al. 2012; Gehring & Hollingsworth, 2002; & Hatcher et al., 2011) and calls for further studies to be done on how these elements may or may not contribute to Compassion Fatigue and Corrections Fatigue. Exploration of the potential impact of compartmentalization and isolation on the development of teacher's identity will offer increased insight into staff retention rates as well.

It was identified in this study, that teachers in segregation/restrictive housing units are resilient despite working in difficult environments. Just as the factors contributing to staff attrition are examined, the contributing factors to retention should also be studied. Schwartz and Porath (2014) found in a large study of workers in the United States, identifying meaning and purpose correlated with people feeling valued in the work and increased motivation. Feelings of value lead to employees feeling safe in their working environment (Schwartz & Porath, 2014) and ultimately increase retention. How teachers in segregation/restrictive housing find value and motivation in their work is a topic which merits further investigation as they seem to be able to overcome significant barriers to do so and remain in their positions.

Staff retention, maintaining safety and promoting security are key concepts the Minnesota DOC is actively addressing with all staff. Based on the work of Schwartz and Porath (2014) and the information brought forth by participants in this study, much could be learned about how motivation is maintained, and resiliency built in teachers in segregation/restrictive housing. The information learned from this population could potentially be applied to assist not only in retaining the correctional workforce but aid in helping teachers in other difficult academic settings to remain in the profession.

Teachers who work in segregation/restrictive housing units are resilient. They continually demonstrate willingness to attempt to reach their students who are in the darkest of places. Each day these teachers attempt to provide educational services in environments which are not remotely conducive to engagement in learning. They do this work without prior training and despite lacking professional acknowledgement and support. Still, they find motivation and fulfillment. Incorporation of the recommendations described will continue to promote and support this resiliency. With strong teachers working in the most difficult environment, the potential for positive outcomes for both offenders and staff is enhanced and the recidivism rates will be reduced.

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## Appendix A

### Permission from the Minnesota Department of Corrections for the Study



Heather L <heather.j.lindstrom@gmail.com>

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#### Questions about conducting research at the MN DOC

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Heather L <heather.j.lindstrom@gmail.com>

Tue, Nov 14, 2017 at 7:53 PM

To: grant.duwe@state.mn.us

Cc: Julie Ernst <jernst@d.umn.edu>, Heather Lindstrom <heather.j.lindstrom@gmail.com>

Dear Director Duwe:

I am contacting you regarding the Minnesota Department of Corrections policies and procedures for conducting research regarding the corrections system.

I am a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota - Duluth who is pursuing an EdD in Teaching and Learning. (My adviser Dr. Ernst is copied on this email as well.) I have completed all of my coursework, my written comps and oral prelim exam. Additionally, I work as a special education teacher for the DOC in several of the men's facilities.

I am hoping to be able to do a phenomenological dissertation on how DOC teachers perceive the experience of working in segregation and restricted housing units in various prisons. The data would be collected through an oral interview process. To keep disruptions to a minimum I would conduct the interviews outside of work time. I would not need access to any DOC equipment or databases.

I have carefully reviewed the DOC's webpage and Research Policy 120.100 and I still have a few remaining questions. The questions are listed below:

1. If I am interviewing the teachers outside of working hours, do I need to complete the DOC research packet?
2. When is the next Review Committee meeting?

I know you are very busy and I truly appreciate any information or feedback you provide.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Heather Lindstrom  
1-651-301-9494 (long distance despite the area code)

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**Questions about conducting research at the MN DOC**

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**Duwe, Grant (DOC)** <grant.duwe@state.mn.us>  
To: Heather <heather.j.lindstrom@gmail.com>  
Cc: Julie Ernst <jernst@d.umn.edu>

Wed, Nov 22, 2017 at 7:33 AM

Heather,

What you're proposing will not require a review. However, it must be made very clear to staff that participation in the interview is completely voluntary and, if they decide to participate, they can also choose to stop the interview at any time.

Good luck with your project.

Regards,

Grant

Grant Duwe, Ph.D.

Director, Research and Evaluation

Minnesota Department of Corrections

1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 200

St. Paul, MN 55108-5219

Phone: (651) 361-7377

Fax: (651) 642-0223

## Appendix B

### Approval from the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board

#### UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*Twin Cities Campus*

*Human Research Protection Program  
Office of the Vice President for Research*

*D528 Mayo Memorial Building  
420 Delaware Street S.E.  
MMC 820  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
Phone: 612-626-5634  
Fax: 612-626-0061  
Email: [irb@umn.edu](mailto:irb@umn.edu)  
<http://www.research.umn.edu/subjects/>*

#### EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

January 17, 2018

Julie Ernst

218-726-8241  
[jernst@umn.edu](mailto:jernst@umn.edu)

Dear Julie Ernst:

On 1/17/2018, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Teaching Inside the Box
Investigator:	Julie Ernst
IRB ID:	STUDY00002352
Sponsored Funding:	None
Grant ID/Con Number:	None
Internal UMN Funding:	None
Fund Management Outside University:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed with this Submission:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TIB Consent Form, Category: Consent Form;</li><li>• HRP-580 Social Template Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol;</li><li>• DOC Inquiry, Category: Other;</li><li>• Interview Questions, Category: Other;</li><li>• DOC Response to Inquiry, Category: Other;</li><li>• Email Script , Category: Recruitment Materials;</li></ul>

The IRB determined that this study meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To arrive at this determination, the IRB used "WORKSHEET: Exemption (HRP-312)." If you have any questions about this determination, please review that Worksheet in the [HRPP Toolkit Library](#) and contact the IRB office if needed.

**Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>**

This study met the following category for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that Human Subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the Human Subjects responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects financial standing, employability, or reputation

Ongoing IRB review and approval for this study is not required; however, this determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a Modification to the IRB for a determination.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the [HRPP Toolkit Library](#) on the IRB website.

For grant certification purposes, you will need these dates and the Assurance of Compliance number which is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003).

Sincerely,

Jeffery P Perkey, CIP, MLS

IRB Analyst

We value feedback from the research community and would like to hear about your experience. The link below will take you to a brief survey that will take a minute or two to complete. The questions are basic, but your responses will help us better understand what we are doing well and areas that may require improvement. Thank you in advance for completing the survey.

Even if you have provided feedback in the past, we want and welcome your evaluation.

[https://umn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_5BiYrqPNMJRQSBn](https://umn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5BiYrqPNMJRQSBn)

**Appendix C**  
**Participant Recruitment Email**

Hello!

I am currently working on my dissertation for the University of Minnesota – Duluth in the Ed.D. program on Teaching and Learning. I am conducting research as part of my dissertation process and I would like to invite you to participate. In addition, I have worked as an employee of the Department of Corrections as a Special Education Teacher for a total of 10 years. You are being invited because of your experience in education at the Minnesota Department of Corrections and your experiences teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units.

Participation in this research involves being interviewed regarding your experiences teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units. The interviews will take approximately 1 hour and will be conducted outside of work hours in the location of your choosing. The time for the interview is the total amount of time you will need to commit to the research project.

Protocols have been followed through the Minnesota Department of Corrections to have permission to conduct this research. The Institutional research Board (IRB) at the University of Minnesota has reviewed and approved the procedures for this study.

Attached you will find a consent form which explains the study in detail.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at: 651-779-2759 (work); 1-301-9494 – *long distance from the Twin Cities despite the area code* (cell/text); [heather.lindstrom@state.mn.us](mailto:heather.lindstrom@state.mn.us) (work) or [heather.j.lindstrom@gmail.com](mailto:heather.j.lindstrom@gmail.com) (home).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

## Appendix D

### Study Consent Form Including Emotional Support Resources

**Title of Research Study:** Teaching Inside the Box

**Researcher:** Heather Lindstrom

**Supported By:** This research is unfunded. This research will be used toward fulfilling the requirements of the Doctor of Education program at the University of MN Duluth.

#### Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because of your experience in education at the Minnesota Department of Corrections and your experiences teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units

#### What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

#### Who can I talk to?

For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, call the study team at:

<p><b>Researcher Name:</b> Heather Lindstrom <b>Researcher Affiliation:</b> Ed.D. Candidate – University of Minnesota Duluth <b>Phone Number:</b> 1-651-301-9494 (long distance from the Twin Cities despite the area code) <b>Email Address:</b> <a href="mailto:gora0019@d.umn.edu">gora0019@d.umn.edu</a></p>
--

<p><b>Researcher's Advisor's Name:</b> Dr. Julie Ernst <b>Affiliation:</b> University of MN Duluth <b>Phone Number:</b> 218-726-8241 <b>Email Address:</b> <a href="mailto:jernst@d.umn.edu">jernst@d.umn.edu</a></p>
---

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants' Advocate

Line at 612-625-1650 or go to <https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns>. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

### **Why is this research being done?**

The purpose of this study is to explore how correctional teachers' experiences in teaching in segregation/restrictive housing units impact their personal and professional lives. An understanding of these experiences and impact can inform recommendations toward supporting correctional educators in providing high quality instruction in segregated/restrictive housing units and responding to their personal and professional needs.

### **How long will the research last?**

We expect that you will be in this research study for 1-2 hours.

### **How many people will be studied?**

We expect about 8 people here will be in this research study.

### **What happens if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research”?**

- You will be contacted by phone by the researcher to arrange for a face-to-face interview.
- The interview will be on the date, at the time and in the location you choose.
- Only you and the researcher will be present during the interview.
- It is anticipated the interview will take approximately 1-2 hours.
- The interview will be taped and notes will be handwritten during the session. These will be used for analysis of the data collected. By signing this consent you agree to your information being audio taped.
- You will participate in a single interview.
- You will be invited to review their own transcripts from the interview and the collective findings at the conclusion of the data analysis. (*This is optional for you.*)
- You may request a copy of the completed study.

### **What happens if I do not want to be in this research?**

You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you.



### **What happens if I say “Yes”, but I change my mind later?**

You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you. If you choose to withdraw, you will be asked if the data you have shared prior to that time may be used in the study. If you decline to allow data shared prior to withdrawing, it will not be included in the study.

### **Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?**

There is minimal risk to participation in this study. It may trigger strong emotions, cause discomfort, and/or reactivate the memory of stressful situations, as well as potential recollections of exposure to varying degrees of direct or indirect emotional, psychological and/or physical trauma.

Below is the process to access the State of Minnesota Employee Assistance Program to help you if any emotional difficulties arise:

#### ***Information about the State of Minnesota Employee Assistance Plan:***

The State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (LifeMatters) provides free, confidential, professional assistance to help employees and families resolve work and personal issues in order to restore and strengthen the health and productivity of employees in the work place. This statewide resource is staffed by professionals who are trained in the areas of counseling psychology, social work, organizational development, chemical dependency, marriage, and family therapy.

LifeMatters has a helpful website which includes information and assistance on various topics including: family life, financial, health, legal, work place, and emotional wellbeing.

Web Address: <http://www.mylifematters.com/ca/>

**ENTER password: STMN1.**

**State of Minnesota employees and dependents can call EAP (LifeMatters) 24/7, 365 days of the year at 800-657-3719.**

### **Will being in this study help me in any way?**

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include the sense of having another person recognize the impact of working in this challenging setting (for example, feelings of affirmation of the difficulty of the setting and affirmation that teaching in this setting has impact on their personal and professional lives). This, for some, has the potential to further or foster feelings of resiliency (being able to contribute meaningfully to the lives of the inmates

they teach, which can offset the strain of teaching in these settings). Talking about these experiences with someone who understands what participants have or are going through could be of direct benefit to the participants, as they may feel their contribution is recognized and valued.

### **What happens to the information collected for the research?**

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this institution.

An exception to our promise of confidentiality is when we in good faith are permitted by law or policy to report evidence of child [or elder] abuse or neglect.

### **Will anyone besides the study team be at my consent meeting?**

You may be asked by the study team for your permission for an auditor to observe your consent meeting (or a recording of your consent meeting). Observing the consent meeting is one way that the University of Minnesota makes sure that your rights as a research participant are protected. The auditor is there to observe the consent meeting, which will be carried out by the people on the study team. The auditor will not record any personal (e.g. name, date of birth) or confidential information about you. The auditor will not observe your consent meeting (or a recording of your consent meeting) without your permission ahead of time.

### **Will I have a chance to provide feedback after the study is over?**

The Human Research Protection Program may ask you to complete a survey that asks about your experience as a research participant. You do not have to complete the survey if you do not want to. If you do choose to complete the survey, your responses will be anonymous.

If you are not asked to complete a survey, but you would like to share feedback, please contact the study team or the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP). See the “Researcher Contact Information” of this form for study team contact information and “Who do I contact?” of this form for HRPP contact information.

### **Use of Identifiable Health Information**

Participant data will not be disclosed. Health and medical records are not accessed or used in this study.

