ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:	THE PRISON CODE'S MASCULINE EXPECTATIONS AND PROGRAM PARTICIPATION
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Gender stereotypes have been long reinforced by society to differentiate men and women (Zimmerman and West 1987). Expectations for men have been defined by masculinity, which aim to guide their thoughts, behaviors, and responses to problems (Spence and Helmreich 1979). Although these expectations of masculinity can include prosocial qualities, such as being a leader and successful, expectations also include harmful qualities such as aggressiveness, violence, and the suppression of emotions (Karp 2010). In prison, however, prosocial outlets for masculinity are reduced as male inmates cannot prove success with a job, money, or relationships. Consequently, masculinity is achieved in prison through achievable outlets such as violence. As a result, the hypermasculine prison environment expects male inmates to conform to physically and emotionally harmful expectations to prove their masculinity. This paper begins with an explanation of the origins and effects of hegemonic masculinity at a societal level. Then, it describes how in prison, masculinity is intensified by the prison code (Sykes and Messinger 1960). Thereafter, four main prison programs are analyzed: mental health programs, anger

management programs, education programs, and vocational and work programs. A qualitative study, utilizing semi-structured interviews with inmates, is proposed to explore the research question of whether masculine expectations, set by the prison code, deter male inmates from participation in voluntary prison programs. The importance of these findings is linked to the extent to which the prison code affects offender rehabilitation.

Keywords: Hegemonic masculinity; toxic masculinity; the prison code; prison programs; reentry; rehabilitation

THE PRISON CODE'S MASCULINE EXPECTATIONS AND PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the United States, gender has been constructed through the reinforcement of opposing expectations for an individual based on whether they are labeled as male or female at birth. Young children are initially exposed to gender roles through their parents, and then subsequently through interactions with peers, institutions, and societal norms. Expectations within gender roles have been molded into the categories of masculinity and femininity, which guide and impact male and female thoughts, behavior, and responses to problems (Spence and Helmreich 1979). The ideals of masculinity and femininity are therefore social constructs, defining the elements and expectations of what it means to be a man or woman (Spence and Helmreich 1979). Because this proposed study focuses on men, masculinity, as it relates to manhood, will be explored in depth.

One of the most dominant masculine ideals in the United States is to teach boys from a very young age that they are supposed to "man up" in response to their problems and anxieties (Broidy and Agnew 1997). Consequently, they grow up internalizing expectations to act tough and to avoid emotions. Overall, masculinity encompasses four key factors: avoiding behaving feminine, the importance of respect, never displaying weakness, and pursuing risks and violence (Fontaine 2019).

These elements of masculinity are significantly intensified behind bars (Morse and Wright 2022). The heightened set of expectations for male inmates are part of what is known as the prison code (Sykes and Messinger 1960). The prison code structures inmates' behaviors around an exaggerated masculinity, including the

importance of physical domination and the complete hiding of weaknesses (Kulpers 2005; Morse and Wright 2022). It also includes a set of informal rules that govern what is and is not allowed within prison walls. For instance, there are rules to never rat out another inmate, to not interfere with other inmates' business, and to not get close to the correctional officers (Sykes and Messinger 1960). Breaking any of these rules puts inmates in a vulnerable position of victimization, which in turn keeps them conforming to its expectations (Philips 2001; Sabo, Kupers, and London 2001).

Much of the research currently surrounding the prison code and its masculine expectations primarily examine how it impacts physical inmate to inmate interactions. However, much less is known about how the prison code affects inmates' ability to improve and be rehabilitated while in prison. In particular, there is a large gap in research linking expectations set by the prison code to male inmates' participation in prison programs. Programs are used in prisons to target inmates' needs and work towards their rehabilitation and successful reentry. Yet, there is reason to believe that masculinity may influence participation in prison programs, in type and degree.

Offender rehabilitation is important not only to individual inmates, but also to society. With more than 600,000 inmates released from prisons each year (Carson 2020), steps need to be taken to prevent this large number of released offenders from re-engaging in criminal behaviors. The goal of offender rehabilitation is to address inmates' mental, physical, intellectual, and psychological challenges while incarcerated, so that when they leave prison, these challenges that led to their criminal behaviors will be reduced (Ward, Fox, and Garber 2014). However, many inmates are released from prison unprepared for reentry and not having been rehabilitated. This is

demonstrated by the fact that 44% of released offenders from prison are re-arrested within their first year of release, and 68% of released offenders are re-arrested within three years (Alper, Durose, and Markman 2018). One of the main reasons for high recidivism rates is that released offenders face numerous obstacles to their success, such as stigmatization, drug and alcohol addictions, mental health problems, physical health problems, access to medical care, limited education, and limited job experiences (Jonson and Cullen 2015). In turn, these obstacles lead many males to resort back to illegal activities (Benson et al. 2011; Bowman and Travis 2012).

One of the most significant ways to address these obstacles is through prison programs. These are used to help inmates address their individual problems while they are incarcerated and prepare them for the challenges they will face upon their reentry. The benefits of these programs have been demonstrated in research by the Urban Institute, which reported that inmates who participate in education, employment, and vocational prison programs are less likely to re-engage in criminal activities upon reentry and have a greater likelihood of finding and holding employment (Lawrence, Mears, Dubin, and Travis 2002). However, if inmates face barriers to participation in programs, their individual problems and post-release challenges cannot be addressed. They are then released facing the same challenges as when they entered (Jonson and Cullen 2015). The purpose of this study is to analyze how the masculine expectations within the prison code and prison culture affects program participation, so that barriers to the rehabilitation of inmates can be adequately addressed, thereby improving their reentry outcomes.

This study focuses on voluntary participation in prison programs, not participation in programs an inmate may have been mandated to attend. For instance, the court occasionally includes mandatory programming for offenders, along with their prison sentence. However, this study is specifically looking at how the prison code affects male inmates' decisions whether to voluntarily enter themselves into a prison program.

In this paper, I will begin by reviewing the origins of masculine expectations in society. I will then examine how these expectations transfer with males upon their entrance into prison. Within this examination, the prison code will be the center of discussion. I will analyze how the prison code's masculine expectations and informal rules influence the behaviors and attitudes of male inmates. Subsequently, I will analyze prison program participation among male inmates and draw connections to the expectations set by the prison code. Finally, I will propose a qualitative study to interview male inmates in each of a minimum, medium, and maximum-security level prison to investigate whether the prison code affects program participation.

The results from this proposed study will respond to the research question asking how masculine expectations of male inmates' behaviors and attitudes, influenced by the prison code, impact their decision on whether to participate in voluntary prison programs. The results will also demonstrate whether certain programs are seen as more acceptable than others, facilitating participation. Accordingly, these findings can be used to improve programming approaches in prisons, as well as to address masculinity at the societal level.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Origins of Masculine Expectations in Society

An individual in the United States is first assigned into the category of 'male' or 'female' at birth, on the basis of their sex organs. Thereafter, a child is named and dressed based on their assigned sex category, creating their gender status (Lorber 2004). That child then grows to learn socially appropriate ways to fit their label of male or female, which Zimmerman and West (1987) described as "doing gender." Gender socialization begins with the child's parents, then continues through peer and societal interactions, as they are expected to play with gender appropriate games and toys, and dress and act in gender appropriate ways (Kretchmar 2011; Weitzman et al. 1972; Zimmerman and West 1987). For instance, young girls are expected to play with dolls and kitchen sets, whereas young boys are expected to play with toy cars and workshop sets. Further, young girls are put in dresses, skirts, and bright colors such as pink and purple. On the other hand, young boys are dressed in shorts, pants, and dark colors. Subsequently, gender expectations are reinforced through cultural norms, the media, and institutions (Risman 2012).

Masculinity and femininity are the terms that have been devised to represent gender expectations. Masculinity and femininity have been socially constructed as opposites, with males as tough and aggressive, and females as nurturing and emotional (Spence and Helmreich 1979). Kimmel and Messner (1989:10) explain the socialization of males as follows:

> Our sex may be male, but our identity as men is developed through a complex process of interaction with the culture in which we both learn the gender scripts appropriate to our culture and attempt to modify those scripts to make them more palatable.

Kimmel and Messner's use of the concept of scripts to do gender demonstrate how males learn the way they are supposed to behave based on society's gender expectations of them.

The socialization of gender expectations led to the formation of hegemonic masculinity. The term hegemonic masculinity was originally coined by Connell (1987) to illustrate society's gender relational inequalities between males and females. In 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt created a model to formulate its ideals. The model describes hegemonic masculinity as the term used to explain the characteristics society sets forth to define the ideal man, requiring all men to try to mold themselves to it (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Hegemonic masculinity creates a set of norms which are assumed to be the way society and human nature operate, and consequently are rarely questioned (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Karp (2010) describes hegemonic masculinity in American culture as characterized by authority, leadership, independence, success, hard work, aggressiveness, heterosexuality, and an inclination for violence. This characterization, therefore, has both positive and negative qualities for men to achieve. For instance, some of these expectations can positively motivate men to work hard in their jobs, to be the financial provider for their families, and to want meaningful relationships. However, the negative qualities have led to the formation of a toxic masculinity.

Toxic masculinity specifically describes the characteristics within hegemonic masculinity that are socially destructive (Kupers 2005). A recent study by Fontaine (2019) found that one of the most significant elements of toxic masculinity is the avoidance of feelings, and instead, an overreliance on aggression. Fontaine's research

supports early studies that demonstrated how the expectation for men to avoid talking about their feelings limits their ability to address strain with acceptable coping mechanisms, and often leads to them responding to their problems and emotions in alternative, often destructive, violent, and aggressive ways (Broidy and Agnew 1997; Pollack 1998). Another significant expectation within toxic masculinity is that men should view their anger as confirmation of their masculinity (Kopper and Epperson 1991; Messerschmidt 1986; Stapley and Haviland 1989). Rather than being vulnerable and expressing anxiety in situations, males have been taught to "man up" and resort to anger (Broidy and Agnew 1997).

Recent research has found that hegemonic masculinity is just as relevant today as it was when Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) published their research on the hegemonic masculinity model. Thirteen years later, Messerchmidt confirmed in his 2018 book, *Hegemonic Masculinity: Formulation, Reformulation, and Amplification*, that hegemonic masculinities still control behaviors of people at the local, regional, and global level. His book also demonstrates how these hegemonic masculine expectations and ideals are hidden in plain sight by shaping "acceptable" and "unacceptable" everyday social relations and meanings, which continue to perpetuate gender roles. For example, he explained how masculinity is still emphasized today in televised sports, as well as by the main characters in movies and shows. Boys and men watching television internalize the physical and emotional expectations they watch, which influences their own behaviors. Messerschmidt (2018) also explained how expectations are established through relational social structures, which he describes as based on interactions in social settings, and through discursive social

structures, which he describes as based on physical language. Today, these relational social structures and discursive social structures intertwine to continue to legitimate masculine expectations.

Ample research finds that masculinity is associated with a host of negative behavior outcomes. For instance, Snell, Belk, and Hawkins (1987) found that aggressive traits, as defined by masculine expectations, were associated with increased drug and alcohol use by males during stressful times. Their results confirmed that alcohol and drug use are influenced by sex roles and personality expectations. Moreover, Spence, Helmreich, and Holahan (1979) found a correlation between masculine expectations and fighting. A later study by Copes, Hochstetler, and Forsyth (2013) explained that many men resort to violence because of their perceived need to defend their character. Their study found that in most instances of fighting, men wanted to defend their status and pride. Qualitative interviews by Bozkurta, Tartanoglub, and Dawes (2015) confirmed these findings, showing in a study among college students, a strong relationship between sex, masculinity, and violence. Most recently, a 2021 study by Gage and Lease found that higher levels of males' compliance to masculine ideology is positively linked to attitudes supporting intimate partner violence.

As demonstrated by research, both past and present, masculine expectations have the potential to lead to harm not only to males, but also to their relationships, families, society, and the criminal justice system. Therefore, masculinity is an important concept to assess. The next section will examine how masculine expectations are particularly prevalent within the legal system.

Masculine Expectations in Prisons

Expectations of men's masculinity and gender roles in society not only influence their likelihood to end up in the prison system, due to their violence and aggression (Broidy and Agnew 1997), but also influence their behavior within the prison walls (Irwin and Cressey 1962). Research by Irwin and Cressey (1962) demonstrate how incarcerated individuals bring with them their "ready-made set of patterns" that they apply to their new prison environment. This includes their preexisting set of personal masculine attitudes and experiences. However, once in prison, the expectations of masculinity are shifted as a result of the change in setting to all men, and in conjunction with the elimination of autonomy, work, family, and relationships (Morse and Wright 2022). Whereas the success of masculine status in communities can be achieved through positive outlets, such as financial stability and a respectable job, these are taken away in prison (Karp 2010).

Without resources for prosocial masculine accomplishments, men in prison must recreate their masculine self through setting conditions of masculine behavior with prison resources (Bandyopadhyay 2006; Phillips 2001). These conditions in turn lead to the hypermasculine values of aggression, emphasizing toxic masculinity (Karp 2010; Williams, Skogstad, and Deane 2001). In 1960, Sykes and Messinger first introduced the prison code. They described the prison code as the set of expectations in prisons used to define how male inmates should behave. These expectations are structured by elements of toxic masculinity. Further, the prison code creates a hierarchy among inmates. The seemingly hard, aggressive men are at the top, and the softer, weaker, feminine men are seen at the bottom, guiding the likelihood of

victimization (Bandyopadhyay 2006; Newton 1994; Sabo, Kupers, and London 2001). Aside from the recreation of masculine expectations, studies have also demonstrated that the consequences of not meeting masculine expectations are much more severe within prisons than within mainstream society (Philips 2001; Sabo, Kupers, and London 2001).

Physical domination is one of the most significant elements of the prison code (Kulpers 2005). Numerous studies show that male inmates use physical assaults, as well as the threat of physical assaults, to maintain order (O'Donnell and Edgar 1998; Sabo, Kupers, and London 2001). One of the primary reasons for this physical domination is the importance of the inmate's status in prison. Interviews conducted by O'Donnell and Edgar (1998) demonstrated how inmates felt the need to protect their status through physical assaults of other inmates. This was confirmed in a study by Phillips (2001), who found that inmates reported the need to respond to disrespect with violence and threats of violence. The inmates in Phillips' (2001) study explained that their performance of violence is essential in their construction of their masculinity and reputation within prison. Further, Sabo and colleagues (2001) demonstrated how this high prevalence of violence in prisons is noteworthy when you consider that approximately 75 percent of inmates in prison are convicted of nonviolent crimes, proving that it is not the characteristics of the men propelling them towards violence, but rather the effects of the norms of prison.

Moreover, a common theme among research is that many inmates resort to the sexual assault of weaker inmates as a way to confirm their power and masculinity (Chonco 1989; Dumond 2003; Man and Cronan 2001; Newton 1994; Philips 2001;

Sabo 2001). Philips (2001) demonstrated that there is a clear role distinction during anal sex within prisons: the recipient is seen as having lost his manhood, whereas the perpetrator enhances his manhood through his physical control. Interestingly, Daquin and colleagues (2016) found that witnessing sexual victimization had similar effects on the inmates as actually experiencing the sexual victimization for themselves. This demonstrates how witnessing the sexual victimization of inmates can be used in prisons as an example set for the other inmates, shaping their behaviors to avoid their own victimization.

Aside from the physical expectations of male inmates, the prison code also profoundly influences inmates mentally. Sabo and colleagues (2001) outlined the elements within the prison code with expectations to suffer in silence, to never admit to being afraid, to never snitch, to not appear gay, to always act hard, to always be ready to fight, especially when disrespected, and to appear as though you are not afraid to hurt someone. The prison code requires men to not only physically, but also psychologically, develop a masculine persona to guard themselves from victimization (Wooldredge 2020). A study by Crewe and colleagues (2014) illustrated how the male inmates felt the need to constantly "block out" their emotions, not only from other inmates, but also from themselves. The inmates in this study demonstrated that "wearing a mask" was the best coping strategy in prison. De Viggiani (2012) demonstrated similar findings, as the inmates in the study agreed that emotional repression was a necessary survival strategy.

Consequently, emotional suppression is linked to severe negative side effects. Research by Laws (2019) revealed that locking up feelings in prison often results in a

"boomerang effect" among inmates. This was characterized by a cycle of the complete suppression of emotions, and then an explosion. Almost all the male inmates interviewed in this study admitted that as a result of constantly hiding their feelings, they experienced unpredictable outbursts of emotions, such as rage or sadness (Laws 2019). This same cycle was also found to be true outside prison, with individuals' suppression of emotions in society (Brownhill et al. 2005). Moreover, research has shown a link to long term negative effects of emotional suppression in prison. For instance, Haney (2003) explained that emotional suppression in prison leads some men to permanently distance themselves from others upon reentry. Haney (2003) demonstrated how engaging in open communication and participating in social interactions can become next to impossible for some released offenders as a result of masking their emotions for so long. This emotional suppression and separation from social interactions has been connected to depression and other mental health concerns (Butler and Gross 2004; Mauss et al. 2004).

Nonetheless, the need to "appear tough," both mentally and physically, is an important defense mechanism in prisons. Reported in a study by Phillips (2001:16), one of the inmates stated, "The sensitive guys in here get taken advantage of, get walked on. People in prison pick up on weakness in someone like a dog picks up on a cat being in the house." Interviews conducted by Laws (2019: 568) also found this same theme of inmates easily picking up on weakness. For instance, one of the inmates, Dean, stated:

> Say you've got a bunch of wildebeest, and you've got one outside on the edges talking about emotions and that. As men, normal people, some look at that as weakness. You've got a pack of wolves, all gathering for these fucking wildebeest here. They're looking and they're thinking

> that's the weak one there. Every one of them will go for the weak one. That's prison man. That's why you keep it bottled up. That's why violence and aggression is needed in these places. I don't like using it myself, obviously I have done it. But violence and aggression is needed for you to be kept safe.

Many later studies also confirmed this same dynamic in prisons. For instance, prison research by Ricciardelli, Maier, and Hannah-Moffat (2015) found that each inmate they interviewed felt the need to act tough to gain respect and to avoid being victimized by other inmates. They also reported that their constant feelings of uncertainty led them to be pro-active in protecting their own safety. Likewise, interviews with prison inmates in a study by Trammell (2009) showed that the inmates thought the rules in the code were "stupid," but followed them anyway so they wouldn't start problems or become vulnerable to victimization. Lastly, interviews conducted by Jewkes (2005) dug deeper into the need to appear tough, demonstrating that even after the inmates' tough persona has been established, they then carry the ongoing pressure and strain to maintain that persona.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the prison code is a widespread and general set of guidelines that can differ in its specific rules between different prisons (Camp and Gaes 2005). However, the main elements of the code are consistent throughout the majority of prisons. This has been reflected in both traditional and recent literature on the social cultures within prisons, as has been presented above. Therefore, because this analysis is focusing on men within a generalizable prison, the general concept of the prison code, as has been explained in this section, will be used. Moving forward, the discussion of the expectations set forth by the prison code will be analyzed within the context of inmate participation in prison programs. Male

inmates' behavior is structured by the pressure to conform to masculine expectations set forth in the prison code. Consequently, whether this in turn affects male inmates' ability to receive rehabilitative prison treatment and participate in programs is important to examine.

Prison Program Participation

The majority of prisons in the United States currently offer some form of rehabilitation programs, classes, or treatment options (Day, Bryan, Davey, and Casey 2006). The purpose of these programs is to provide incarcerated individuals with the resources they need to improve themselves and prepare for a successful reentry. The effectiveness of prison programs has been found to be dependent on various elements, such as its length of time, matching programs with inmates, matching teaching methods to inmates' learning styles, and emphasizing the inmates' strengths (Andrews et al. 1990; Bonta and Andrews 2007; Latessa and Lowenkamp 2006). Further, programming can differ between each individual prison. These differences include types of programs offered, how many inmates are allowed in a program, requirements for participation, and scheduling availability (Crittenden and Koons-Witt 2017). Consequently, these factors could potentially affect an inmate's ability to participate in various prison programs.

Inmates can be motivated to choose to participate in a prison program for a variety of reasons. A recent study by Croux and colleagues (2019) reported that motivations for participation in a range of prison programs include factors such as gained knowledge, a way to pass time, a distraction from prison life, and a way to increase job opportunities upon reentry. In addition, program participation can lead to

an improved prison atmosphere. Research has shown that when the majority of inmates participate in prison programs and services, there is a better dynamic within prisons, less conflicts and violations, and lowered overall recidivism (Edgar, Jacobson, and Biggar 2011; Kim and Clark 2013).

However, even if the prison offers a range of accessible prison programs, the culture and expectations within prisons may make it difficult for male inmates to choose to participate in programs and obtain the rehabilitative treatment they should be receiving, both mentally and physically (De Viggiani 2012; Kupers 2005). Studies have examined the ratio of male inmates interested in prison programs to their actual likelihood of participation (Brosens et al. 2019; Kaiser et al. 2021; Neller et al. 2016). The most recent study, by Kaiser and colleagues (2021), surveyed inmates in a southern prison and found that for all programs offered within the facility, the level of interest reported drastically exceeded the actual participation of inmates in those programs. For instance, they found that 73.6 percent of inmates reported being 'very interested' in pre-release programs, 19.29 percent reported being 'minimally or somewhat interested', and only 7.11 percent reported no interest. However, the study found that only 9.83 percent of inmates in that prison actually participated in a pre-release program. Evidently, although many male inmates want to participate in rehabilitative programs offered in prison, they may feel prevented from actually participating in them.

In addition to the gap between interest in prison programs and participation in the programs, research has also shown disproportionate participation when comparing male and female inmates. For instance, a study by Crittenden and Koons-Witt (2017)

found that in comparison to female inmates, male inmates were significantly less likely to participate in mental health, education, vocational, life-skills, and parenting programs. Their study found that even though there were less total programming options in male prisons than female prisons, participation was still significantly higher for female inmates when comparing the same types of programs offered at the prisons. Earlier research by Morash and colleagues (1994) found similar findings in both regards. For instance, when comparing the same type of educational program offered in a male and female prison, they found female inmates were 20 percent more likely to participate in the program than male inmates. These results have important implications because it requires us to ask what factors influence females to participate more in prison programs than males, when comparing the same programs offered.

The prison code may be one possible explanation for the deterrence of male inmates from choosing to participate in prison programs. Research has shed light on the impact of the elements within the prison code on inmates' decisions of participation. For instance, Morgan and colleagues (2007) found that a major barrier to an inmate's willingness to seek participation in prison programs and services is self-preservation. In their study, self-preservation included worries about being seen as weak, being seen as a snitch, being part of a "rat group," and fear that the information they share will be used against them. These are all elements within the prison culture that could lead to inmates' victimization. Moreover, a later study by Brosens and colleagues (2014) found many inmates reported they did not attend programs because they did not want to give off the image of "being soft," which goes against the expectations set by the prison code.

Additionally, the prison culture can influence inmates to take protective steps to avoid causing problems with other inmates. As a result of wanting to avoid confrontations, studies have shown that some inmates report that they purposely avoid participation in programs because they do not want to interact with other inmates, in fear of any conflicts (Brosens et al. 2014; Croux et al. 2019). By ensuring they are evading problems with other inmates, they know they are not causing any further problems for themselves, which makes their lives easier in prison. Although some research has shown that social interactions with other inmates in program participation can be viewed as a pull factor toward involvement, this support comes mainly from female inmates (Clegg and McNulty 2002; Prins et al. 2009). However, for males, many inmates feel blocked from desiring unnecessary social interactions.

Another factor that may contribute to male inmates avoiding prison programs is the lack of privacy in their participation. Compared to males in the community, males in prison have the added burden of the lack of anonymity, as they are always accompanied by prison guards and are seen entering and leaving programs by the guards and other inmates (Williams et al. 2001). This creates an issue for inmates because their help-seeking behavior could be used against them and stigmatize them. In turn, this worry can prevent inmates from taking part in the services they need.

Nonetheless, it is important to look at specific types of services offered within prisons to better understand how the prison code differentially affects inmates' participation in various programs. Whether some programs are more accepted by the prison code than others can give insight into the likelihood of inmate participation. The four broad programs focused on in this analysis will be mental health programs,

anger management programs, education programs, and vocational and work programs, as these are a few of the most common and generalizable programs offered throughout prisons in the United States (Stephan and Karberg 2000).

Mental Health Programs

Mental health services within prisons are defined as therapeutic interventions aimed at addressing the main causes of emotional and behavioral problems of inmates (Adams 1985). These services address a range of issues such as anxiety, depression, adjustment issues, and addiction (Boothby and Clements 2000). In prisons, these services most often take the form of individual and group counseling and therapy sessions (Adams 1985; Osofsky 1996). Counseling services are offered in 92 percent of the country's prisons, demonstrating the widespread availability of these programs to incarcerated individuals (Stephan and Karberg 2000). Unfortunately, just because these services are offered doesn't mean that inmates actually participate in them.

Morgan and colleagues (2007) found that newly incarcerated inmates were the group who worried most about the perceptions of other inmates if they were to receive mental health services. This is concerning because these new inmates need to be targeted with mental health services as soon as they enter prison. Studies show that new inmates are at the highest risk of mental health issues, as they are deprived of their liberty and known way of life (Forrester et al. 2018; Mathias and Sindberg 1985). Further, they must adjust to a new, threatening, and dehumanizing institution, which has been found to be connected to developing problematic behavioral and attitudinal habits (Sinha 2010). Therefore, these inmates need to receive services to mentally deal with this transition.

Unfortunately, the prison code rule of not being a “snitch” has shown to cause significant barriers to both newer and older inmates’ likelihood of participating in mental health programs (Brosens et al. 2014; Kupers 2005). In connection to being a snitch, one major concern of male inmates with respect to therapy and counseling services in prison is the lack of confidentiality. The confidentiality requirements that guide counselors in the community are much different from the policies in prisons, as the requirements in prison require mandatory reporting for a much larger array of threats and behaviors. In most prisons, mental health counselors are required to immediately report to a correctional officer if an inmate discloses any type of potential threat to themselves, another inmate, staff, or the general operation of the prison (Kupers 2005). Thereafter, the correctional officer will require the counselor to disclose the inmates’ names (Kupers 2005). However, because of the importance of the no snitch rule, the inmate who disclosed this threat would likely become the target of severe victimization. Brosens and colleagues (2014) supported this concern by finding that many prison inmates in their study indicated they did not initiate participation in programs because they understood that staff had the obligation to report the information they share.

The significance of not being labeled a “snitch” or a “rat” can be better understood by the insights of inmates. For instance, according to a prison inmate named Don, reported in a study by Phillips (2001:19),

> A stand-up guy is never a rat. He's gonna do the right thing. If I see something happen in the yard, I see somebody get hit, and the police lug me to 'the hole' with three other guys, I deny everything even if I know what happened. I say I saw nothing. I'm being a stand-up guy. I'm not telling what I know. I'm keeping the code of silence. In prison, you keep your mouth shut. Period. If you rat or snitch, the police have to put you

> in protective custody and transfer you out. You will never be safe again in the general population.

In Don's statement, he is referring to the correctional officers, or prison guards, as the 'police.' In this study by Phillips (2001), Don demonstrates how 'no snitching' is a binding rule among all inmates, as they are all aware of the importance of secrecy.

Overall, because counseling and therapy requires inmates to talk about their experiences in prison, it is very hard to avoid talking about their own victimizations or witnessing other victimizations. Therefore, the avoidance of speaking about prison experiences, so that they are not labeled a snitch, may be seen as a significant factor in deciding not to participate in a mental health program. Additionally, the prison code requires inmates to hide their vulnerabilities in prison. Consequently, many male inmates have avoided victimization in prison by learning how to hide their emotions not only from others, but also from themselves (Crewe et al. 2014; Viggiani 2012). Going to a mental health program would require them to open themselves up emotionally. Thus, the perceived need to suppress their emotional vulnerabilities may considerably prevent male inmates from participation in mental health programs.

Anger Management Programs

Anger among inmates is a significant and well-established problem within male prisons, prompting over three quarters of the country's prisons to offer an anger management program (Howells et al. 2005; Kroner and Reddon 1995; Rice et al 1990; Stephan and Karberg 2000). It is important to first note the influence of masculine expectations on men's anger expression. This can be attributed to gender socialization before males enter prison, as males are taught from a young age to react

to their problems with anger (Broidy and Agnew 1997; Karp 2010; Pollack 1998; Williams, Skogstad, and Deane 2001). This then becomes further emphasized in prison, as male inmates enter an environment of toxic masculinity. A study by Suter and colleagues (2002) demonstrated that male inmates are expected to express their anger by aggression against others. However, this creates many issues in their problem solving and daily interactions. Therefore, anger management programs can really benefit male inmates, both within prison and when they are released.

Research has shown that an inmate's readiness for anger management treatment impacts their decision of participation (Howells et al. 2005; Ward et al. 2004). Nonetheless, readiness for anger management programs can be impacted by the prison culture. Research has examined how the setting and social environment of the prison impacts inmates' readiness for treatment (Clarke 1985; Howells and Day 2003; Peat and Winfree 1992). The prison culture creates an atmosphere where daily interactions and lessons learned and reinforced by inmates contradict with the lessons taught in anger management programs. For instance, Howells and Day (2003) explained how masculine expectations within prisons may create barriers to male inmates' participation in anger management programs, due to their resistance to wanting to change their beliefs and behaviors.

More specifically, the prison code puts social value on anger and aggression, as it contributes to an inmates' identity and status. Tiedens (2001) demonstrated that individuals who express anger are given the most status and power. Therefore, the social influence of complying with the expectations of the prison code do not align with the anti-aggression lessons taught in anger management programs. For male

inmates, their expressions of anger and aggression can be seen as essential for their safety in prison, which can cause them to not want to jeopardize that (Howells and Day 2003). Accordingly, this inconsistency in views on anger may act as a significant element in deterring male inmate participation in anger management programs.

Education Programs

Education programs are imperative in prisons, as approximately 68 percent of prison inmates have not graduated high school (Harlow 2003). Consequently, gaining employment upon release back into the community is challenging not only because of a prison record, but also because of a lack of an education. Accordingly, obtaining an education in prison, such as through a GED program or post-secondary education program, can have many positive impacts. Studies have demonstrated that participation in these types of programs lead to lower recidivism rates, a greater likelihood of continued education, an increased possibility of finding employment, and a higher income (Blomberg et al. 2011; Kim and Clark 2013; Nally et al. 2012). With respect to recidivism, a study by Nally and colleagues (2012) found that the inmates who had not attended an education program in prison were 3.7 times more likely to recidivate among reentry than those inmates who had participated in such programs. As a result of the general knowledge of the positive effects of these programs, 85 percent of the country's prisons offer an education program (Stephan and Karberg 2000).

As a whole, research on prison education programs does not clearly show the impact of the elements within the prison code on participation. On the one hand, research has examined why inmates choose to participate in these programs. Among

the most cited reasons are personal motives such as competence building, gaining skills, and self-esteem (Manger, Eikeland, and Asbjørnsen 2012; Tewksbury and Stengel 2006). These characteristics are also in line with positive masculine values. Notably, however, studies have shown that social reasons are not a motivational factor for most male inmates' participation in education programs (Manger, Eikeland, and Asbjørnsen 2012; Roth et al. 2017). This could be related to research on prison culture that demonstrates inmates want to avoid unneeded interactions with other inmates, to avoid conflicts (Brosens et al. 2014; Croux et al. 2019).

Moreover, research has cited reentry factors for inmates' motivation to participate in prison education programs. For instance, a study by Schlesinger (2005) revealed that many inmates want to be a positive role model for their children upon reentry and cite having a high school diploma as a significant influence in that regard. Schlesinger (2005) also cited inmates' motivation of employment upon reentry. This study found that many of the inmates understood that without a high school degree, their chance at finding employment is lowered. These men are looking towards the expectations that will be set for them upon their release from prison.

On the other hand, research has also pointed towards the prison code's negative influence on participation in education programs. For instance, Batchelder and colleagues (2017) found that participation can often depend on their "approval" to participate by the inmates at the top of the hierarchy. They also reported that an inmates' ability to successfully study for their classes, or tests such as the GED, is impacted by the prison environment, due to the contradictory expectations of the inmate (Batchelder et al. 2017). Research by Batchelder and Rachal (2000)

demonstrated this contradiction by finding that the view of an inmate "cooperating with the system" can lead to retaliation by other inmates. Further, Schlesinger (2005) found that some inmates didn't participate in education programs because of the concern that others would perceive them as weak. One of the inmates in Schlesinger's study explained that joining an education program could take away the character, or role, an inmate is trying to play.

Another important deterrent to participation in education programs is the lack of privacy in the classroom setting. Inmates may not want other inmates to see them struggling with their education. This appearance of struggling not only contributes to their embarrassment, but may also put them in a vulnerable position, where they can be ridiculed and victimized (Batchelder and Rachal 2000). This finding also ties into research about the educational self-efficacy of inmates. Studies have found that inmates with higher learning self-efficacy are more likely to participate in education programs than those with low learning self-efficacy (Diseth et al. 2008; Jones et al. 2013; Roth et al. 2017).

Furthermore, a recent study by Brosens, Croux, and De Donder (2019) found that first time prison inmates were significantly less likely to participate in prison education programs than those inmates who had been incarcerated previously. Similarly, other studies have shown that inmates who have been incarcerated longer are more likely to participate in education programs than newer inmates (Jackson and Innes 2000; Jones et al. 2013; Rose and Rose 2014; Roth et al. 2017). This research is also in line with the research by Morgan and colleagues (2007), who found newly incarcerated inmates as the group worried most about the perceptions of their

participation in mental health programs. Research by Phillips (2001) explained this phenomenon, finding that new inmates are expected to prove their masculinity upon their entrance into prison. With all the other inmates' attention on them, they are being scrutinized to make sure they respect the prison code and prove their worth. This weight on new inmates deters them from risky inmate and guard interactions. It also can be seen to deter them from voluntarily joining prison programs, as they do not want their first impressions to label them as vulnerable. Phillips (2001) also found that the "older guys," or inmates who have been in prison longest, have already built their reputation and have achieved a certain status, allowing them more freedom.

Overall, it is unclear whether the expectations set by the prison code influences male inmates to be more motivated to participate in education programs, due to building skills and increased employment opportunities, or whether they are more likely to deter male inmates from participation, as a result of putting themselves in a vulnerable position and negatively impacting the inmate role they play.

Employment and Vocational Programs:

A strikingly large number of inmates enter prison with little employment backgrounds. Employment and vocational programs are aimed at increasing an inmate's chance at finding and holding employment upon their reentry (Bouffard, Mackenzie, and Hickman 2000). These programs have many different approaches, such as classroom-based education, including education about resumes, interviews, time management, work ethics and work-related skills, as well as hands-on job training and apprenticeship (Bouffard, Mackenzie, and Hickman 2000; Lawrence, Mears, Dubin, and Travis 2002). Moreover, programs such as prison industries offer

real work experience within prisons. Prison industries train inmates in various fields, such as woodworking, metal working, manufacturing, sewing, and construction, and then provide them with jobs during their incarceration to practice these skills (Richmond 2014; Scott and Derrick 2006). The goal of all these programs is to strengthen inmates' marketable work skills and work ethics (Richmond 2014). They also have the added goal of keeping inmates out of trouble, by keeping them busy and establishing a routine (Richmond 2014). A meta-analysis by Wilson, Gallagher, and MacKenzie (2000) concluded that participants in vocation and work programs recidivate at a lower rate and are employed at a higher rate than non-participants in these programs. The Bureau of Justice has reported that 88 percent of the country's prisons offer an employment or vocational program (Stephan and Karberg 2003).

Overall, research on employment programs within prisons points to the possibility that participation may be more accepted by the prison code. For instance, a study by Richmond (2014) evaluated male inmates' perceptions to prison industry participation. She found that the inmates reported greater confidence and a sense of pride as a result of their work. Moreover, because the inmates in her study were being paid for their work in the prison industries, they explained that work gave them a sense of identity because they could provide for themselves again. Even though the pay was very low, it still gave the men a sense of accomplishment. A study by Batchelder and Pippert (2002) also demonstrated that inmates generally hold favorable attitudes toward these programs. Their results showed that in deciding between work in skilled industrial jobs, such as in carpentry, maintenance, and sewing, or work as janitor, 79.1 percent of inmates reported they prefer working in a

skilled position, even though it consisted of longer hours and harder work. The reasons cited for favoring skilled jobs included a sense of accomplishment and greater opportunities upon release. Moreover, 65 percent of the inmates in the study reported that they would work more hours if given the option, showing that the inmates held positive perceptions toward participation in work programs.

Furthermore, it is important to note that employment is highly valued for male inmates upon their release from prison. Recent research by Panuccio and Christian (2019) demonstrated that as released offenders reenter society, they internalize expectations of providing financially for themselves and their families, as their conceptions of manhood in society require provider roles. Moreover, men feel they fail to demonstrate masculinity if they do not obtain employment and an income (Spjeldnes, Solveig, and Goodkind 2009). A study by Tewksbury and Stengel (2006) found the highest motivating factor for participation in vocational programs in a southern prison to be obtaining a job upon reentry. Therefore, research has revealed that male inmates' preparation in prison through employment and vocational programs for work upon reentry may not be discouraged by the prison code, as compared to other programs.

Chapter 3: Proposed Research

Although there is a large gap in research examining how the prison code directly affects participation in various prison programs, research has demonstrated that certain expectations within the prison code can significantly impact inmates' decisions and behaviors. The proposed research study aims to fill this gap by answering the research question: how does the prison code's masculine expectations of behaviors and attitudes impact male inmates' decisions of whether to participate in voluntary prison programs? The study seeks to examine the prison code through narratives of firsthand experiences of male inmates. Semi-structured qualitative interviews with inmates will be conducted to allow for the investigation of how the prison code governs their behaviors and attitudes. To ensure different prison settings are represented, each of a minimum, medium, and maximum-security level prison will be selected.

Chapter 4: Methods

Sample Selection

The proposed study seeks to obtain data from inmates in all three of a minimum, medium, and maximum level security prison. The reason for including each security level is to account for any differences in prison codes and cultures. For instance, research by Camp and Gaes (2005) demonstrated that grouping inmates into leveled prisons by their criminal propensities creates various criminogenic prison cultures. By examining different levels of prisons, it will allow me to determine whether security level affects the strength of the prison code's expectations. Moreover, obtaining data from these three types of prisons will allow for the observation of any variation in offered programming. This is important to account for because programming availability has been found in some prisons to be influenced by security level (Morash et al. 1994). In turn, this will permit me to draw more conclusions, as I will evaluate the differences and similarities between inmates' experiences in various types of prisons.

Based on location convenience, I have selected male state prisons located in Maryland. The minimum level prison selected is the Central Maryland Correctional Facility, located in Sykesville. The medium level security prison is the Roxbury Correctional Institution, located in Hagerstown, and the maximum level security prison is the Jessup Correctional Institution, located in Jessup. Maryland does not publish demographic information for each of these individual prisons; however, according to Maryland statewide incarceration trends, 69 percent of the prison population consist of Black individuals, 25 percent are White individuals, 4 percent

are Latinx individuals, 1 percent are Asian and Pacific Islander individuals, and 1 percent are Native Americans (Vera Institute of Justice 2019).

I intentionally chose for the interviews to be conducted with men currently incarcerated, rather than men released from prison, to avoid the problem of men not recalling in-depth memories, due to their experiences in prison not being as recent. By interviewing current inmates, they will be able to explain how they are currently living and express their current emotions and thoughts. Moreover, I do not want their reintegration experiences to affect their responses about their prison experiences (Ricciardelli, Maier, and Hannah-Moffat 2015). However, the limitation to interviewing current inmates is that men may be tentative about talking freely about their experiences. They may be afraid of repercussions by other inmates or guards if they find out they shared their stories and experiences. Nonetheless, I hope to avoid this by ensuring confidentiality and not allowing prison staff in the room during the interview. It will be explained to the inmates that anything they say will not and cannot be traced back to them.

To recruit participants for my study, I will go into the prisons and give pitches to small groups of inmates. Prior to conducting these pitches, I will speak to the warden of the prison to find out the best way to access small groups of inmates. The pitch will include a summary of the purpose of my study and its research process. After each pitch I conduct, each inmate in the group will be required to fill out a slip, where they will circle whether or not they want to participate. Then, each inmate would have to place their slip into a box. This allows the inmates anonymity in who indicated interest in participation. Further, I will post flyers, with participation slips,

around the prison to advertise the study. To allow for anonymity in participant sign ups, I am going to have a metal box securely attached to the wall next to each flyer. The box will have a slight opening to enter volunteer slips and will be too small for inmates to take out any of the slips. This will ensure that other inmates will not be able to see who signed up, and in turn their interest will not be held against them.

The only requirement for participation will be that the inmate has served at least one year in that prison. This requirement will guarantee that the inmate understands the prison culture and the informal rules of the prison. Moreover, this requirement confirms that the inmate is aware of the program options in the prison and has had access to participation. After the participant slips are compiled, the slips will be separated based on two elements: how long the inmate has been incarcerated, and whether the inmate has ever participated in a voluntary prison program. First, the names will be separated into categories based on the number of years the inmate has been incarcerated, including 1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and more than 15 years. Then, the names within each time category will be further divided into two subcategories, based on whether they have or have not participated in a voluntary prison program. Lastly, 1 name will be randomly selected from each of the 10 subcategories.

As an aside, this sample selection will be the prioritized goal; however, if there is a time category that does not include both inmates who have and have not participated in a prison program, then any 2 names will be chosen from that category. For example, if all the participation slips in the ‘over 15 years’ category indicate that

the inmates have participated in a program, then 2 names will still be randomly chosen among that total group.

As a whole, this selection criteria allows for variation in experiences with the prison code. With respect to selecting names of those who have and have not chosen to participate in prison programs, it allows for both perspectives and experiences to be included in the interviews. Moreover, research shows that the number of years an inmate is incarcerated for can significantly affect program participation. For instance, studies have demonstrated that newer inmates are less likely to participate in programs than inmates who have been incarcerated for a longer time (Jackson and Innes 2000; Jones et al. 2013; Morgan et al. 2007; Phillips et al. 2001; Rose and Rose 2014; Roth et al. 2017). Further, inmates who have been in prison longest have been shown to be allowed the most freedom in not conforming to the prison code (Phillips et al. 2001). These inmates will also have more experiences in the prison and can make distinctions from when they were a new inmate, to current day. It is important that this study accounts for differences in experiences by conducting interviews with inmates covering a wide range of involvement and time served.

The nature of the qualitative interviews will be conducted one-on-one, with the interviewer and inmate, in private rooms, which would be the rooms inmates meet with their lawyers. My hope is to not have any correctional staff in the room during the interview, as this could deter the inmate from feeling comfortable in exposing his experiences and thoughts. Moreover, after receiving informed consent from the inmate, the interview will be voice recorded. This will allow for the dialogue to flow easier and deeper because the interviewer will not be taking notes.

Potential Questions

To ensure confidentiality, this study will follow the practices outlined by the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board (IRB) in all its data collection. Before the interview begins, the interviewer must go through informed consent requirements with the inmate. For instance, the inmate will be informed of the purpose of the research. Additionally, the interviewer will explain that their participation is voluntary, that they can withdraw their participation at any time during the interview, as well as guarantee them of their confidentiality. It is important that the inmates understand that prison staff will not have access to the data and that their testimony will not be traceable to them. The interviewer will also ask the interviewee's permission to record their interview, to transcribe at a later time. The interviewer cannot begin the interview and start recording until the inmate signs a consent form.

The format of the qualitative interviews will be semi-structured. A semi-structured interview guide will be given to interviewers, with main questions and supporting prompts (Appendix). However, the interviewers will be given the flexibility to explore various paths based on the interviewees' experiences. Accordingly, not all questions on my interview guide will be asked by the interviewers, and the order of questions will vary based on the individual experiences of the inmates.

The general flow of the interviews will begin with background questions of the inmate, including information about their offense, sentence, and time served. Then, the interviewer will ask questions to evaluate the prison code and its

connections to masculinity. Questioning will then transition into the inmates' individual participation in prison programs, as well as barriers to participation. The interviewer will also ask about the general attitudes which inmates hold about prison programs. Finally, the interviewer will generate questions which will connect the prison code's influence with program participation.

To gather information about the prison code, the interviewer will prompt the inmate to explain the informal rules within the prison. The word "prison code" should not be used, unless the inmate uses it first, because inmates may not know its meaning. Instead, the interviewer will ask how they feel their behavior is controlled in prisons and how they feel their identity has been shaped in prison. By prompting inmates to recount stories about their own personal experiences and other inmate behavior, the social setting of the prison will be deconstructed and better understood (Trammel 2009). This will allow me to identify the elements of the prison code.

Likewise, to understand how the inmates view masculine expectations in prisons, they will be asked questions about their experiences which are known to reflect masculine ideals. For instance, they will be asked about characteristics they associate with being a man. The men will also be asked whether they feel they need to hide their vulnerabilities in prison and to explain times when they felt their identity was threatened. These types of questions have been found in interviews by Ricciardelli and colleagues (2015) to generate a great amount of insight into how men perceive masculinity. Their study aimed to examine men's perceptions of their masculinity and their various risks in prison. Rather than ask questions about specific risks and how they specifically understood their masculinity, Ricciardelli and

colleagues (2015: 497) found that asking more general questions, such as "whether they felt vulnerable in prison," allowed the inmate to speak more freely, and the interviewer to explore more paths.

Furthermore, to obtain information to determine how the prison code affects program participation, the interviewers will prompt the inmates to talk about their personal perceptions of prison programs and how they believe others perceive prison programs. They will also be prompted to talk about whether they ever felt prevented from participation in voluntary programs due to how they would be viewed by others, as well as if they thought their participation would affect their identity. The interviewers would emphasize to the inmates that the questions are asking about voluntary prison programs, rather than programs the inmate may have been mandated to attend. These types of questions will allow me to understand whether expectations set by the prison code affect inmates' beliefs in their ability to participate. Additionally, every inmate interviewed will be asked to rank mental health programs, anger management programs, education programs, and employment and vocational programs in the order in which they think other inmates would view their participation within the program as most acceptable to least acceptable. This ranking, along with the explanations for the ranks, will provide significant insight into how participation in different programs is perceived among inmates.

Analytic Strategy

The goal of this research is to understand how the expectations set forth for inmates by the prison code affects their decisions in whether to participate in prison programs. Moreover, it seeks to evaluate whether certain prison programs are

perceived differently than others, allowing for more participation. The research proposal seeks to interview 30 total male inmates, 10 from each of a minimum, medium, and maximum security-level prison.

After the interviews are completed, the recordings will be transcribed verbatim. Then, with the transcriptions of the interviews, I will code them using NVivo, a qualitative analysis program. This software will allow me to classify, annotate, and analyze the information from the interviews. Within this analysis, I will look for themes in the similarities and differences in experiences with the prison code, including its expectations and the strength of its influence on inmate behavior. I will also focus on looking for themes within program participation, specifically common barriers to participation, as well as common reasons for participation.

The domains in my analysis will include background questions, the prison code, masculine expectations, individual participation in prison programs, general participation in prison programs, and the prison code's impact on participation in prison programs. I will also have a category for each of the four prison programs I am analyzing: mental health programs, anger management programs, education programs, and employment and vocational programs. Lastly, further sub-categories will be created within the larger domains based on the information received from the inmates in the interviews.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

This study aims to fill the gap in research between the prison code and inmates' rehabilitation before reentry. With 95 percent of inmates eventually being released from prison (Hughes and Wilson 2003), reentry should be a prioritized focus of prison management and decisions (Luther et al. 2011; Seiter and Kadela 2003). These individuals overwhelmingly enter prison with low education levels, little employment history, mental health problems, substance-abuse problems, disabilities, homelessness, and numerous other challenges (Clear 2008; Hlavka, Wheelock, and Jones 2015). If these challenges are not addressed while inmates are incarcerated, they will be presented with them again, in addition to the added mental and physical health issues resulting from their prison experience, when they reenter their communities. This cycle is demonstrated in a study by Luther and colleagues (2011), in which many released individuals from prison explained that they felt compelled to return to their old criminal activities during reentry. One of the participants in the study by Luther and colleagues (2011: 478) stated:

> You getting out, you have no structure, no job, no foundation, no career, no education. The only choice you have is to go back out and do what you had done before the case to take care of your family. And your kids. Everybody already knows you. If you've been walking up the streets, they expecting you to mess up.

This ex-offender's testimony demonstrates how easy it is to fall back into crime if steps are not taken in prison to address the challenges inmates will face upon release.

This cycle reveals the importance of prisons providing programs with rehabilitative support to inmates. However, the problem is that research shows the

relatively low levels of prison program participation (Kaiser et al 2021; Lawrence, Mears, Dubin, and Travis 2002). Accordingly, it is critical to analyze the barriers to inmates' participation in prison programs. The proposed research study aims to address this concern by conducting interviews with male inmates to examine the prison code, and whether its masculine expectations and informal rules impact their decisions of whether to participate in different prison programs. The information collected in these interviews will be used to determine whether masculine expectations in prison impact inmates' rehabilitation.

Implications

This proposed research study is important because reentry unpreparedness perpetuates the harmful cycle of recidivism and higher crime rates. If the proposed study were to find that prison program participation was significantly affected by the masculine expectations set by the prison code, there would be major implications. Although it would not be easy to change the culture inside a prison, initial steps could be taken to start this process.

First, if a relationship is found between the prison code and program participation, then further research should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing programs in prisons that address the deconstruction of toxic masculine expectations. The potential benefits of these programs are demonstrated by research which show that male inmates' own perceptions of masculinity differ from what they think other inmates believe about masculinity. For instance, a study conducted by Morse and Wright (2022) asked male inmates how they personally defined masculinity, and they each used words such as a leader, strong, selfless,

responsible, a protector, and a supporter. These characteristics do not display the characteristics of a harmful, toxic masculinity. However, when asked how they thought other inmates defined masculinity, they believed their definitions consisted of being tough, violent, and emotionless. These results demonstrate that although inmates' beliefs may not be in line with that of the prison code, they are convinced that other inmates' beliefs are. In turn, as demonstrated by Morse and Wright (2022), this leads those men to adopt a new hypermasculine shield to fit in with the rest of the inmates, which thereafter perpetuates the cycle of the influence of the prison code. Masculinity programs have the potential to change the prison environment by helping inmates realize that many other inmates do not support the violent hypermasculine environment of prison or the expectations set by the prison code either.

The Inside Out Circle Foundation and the Jericho Circle Project are two similarly modeled prison programs that have been implemented in prisons to reshape masculine expectations. Karp (2010) completed an evaluation of these two programs, in which he interviewed program facilitators and directors. Both programs consist of weekly support circles, where a small group of inmates are led through activities and discussions by facilitators (Karp 2010). The evaluation explained that the programs seek to establish trust among the group of inmates to eventually achieve a "safe container," where the men can speak openly without judgment. The programs ultimately redefine masculinity as being brave enough to speak about feelings, rather than experiencing behavioral reactions to them. Jericho Circle (2021) explained that their program achieves this by teaching men how to identify their feelings and

emotions, and then how to express them through communication. It also teaches men positive ways to address conflict in their life and to hold themselves accountable.

However, speaking about your feelings and trusting a group of inmates goes against the elements of the prison code, in which inmates are expected to hide emotions, not be vulnerable, and not share personal information (Sabo et al. 2001). To address this issue, the programs aim to guide inmates in separating the need for self-protection with emotional maturity. Ultimately, they redefine masculinity as being brave enough to remove the "prison mask." The central goal is for the inmates to learn how to differentiate the use of prison masks as a conscious defense strategy from an internalized reaction.

Participant testimonies have reflected the benefits of these programs. For instance, one of the inmates who participated in the Jericho Circle Project stated:

> I have learned that God doesn't make me junk. I am a human being who has feelings and emotions. I have learned that life does not have to be filled with anger, rage, and pain. It is okay to feel good, it is okay to feel love, it is okay to have an opinion and voice it. (Jericho Circle 2021)

The evaluation completed by Karp (2010) mirrored this participant's testimony and found promising results, reporting that inmates can achieve personal growth and emotional intelligence through the programs' redefining of masculinity. However, Karp (2010) focused on uncovering how the programs operate, rather than reporting an empirical review of their success. Thus, more research should be done to evaluate the Inside Out Circle Foundation and Jericho Circle Project. Other than the research by Karp (2010), there is very little evaluation on the effectiveness of masculinity programs in prisons. Moreover, not many masculinity programs other than these two have been implemented into prisons. Therefore, before determining whether

masculinity programs should be widely implemented into male prisons, further research should be done to evaluate its success.

If future research does show these programs to be successful, they should be mandated in every prison. To overcome the barrier of inmates feeling blocked from participation, the program could be mandatory for all new inmates. In turn, this would address numerous challenges new inmates face. First, this requirement would address the issue of new inmates being the group most afraid of participation in prison programs, in fear of being seen as vulnerable (Brosens, Croux, and De Donder 2019; Morgan et al. 2007; Phillips 2001). With a required class, these inmates will not be viewed as making the deliberate choice to put themselves into the program. Moreover, with respect to new inmates being the group most in need of counseling (Forrester et al. 2018; Mathias and Sindberg 1985), this would allow them to receive support during their transition into the new prison environment, as well as teach them how to express their feelings through words and healthy outlets. Most importantly, requiring a program targeting masculinity will prepare new inmates to rethink masculine expectations set for them both in prison and in society, and how to consciously and collectively go about changing this.

Nevertheless, if the findings from the proposed study do not show a relationship between masculine expectations set by the prison code and participation in prison programs, important implications would follow regardless. As demonstrated by research, the prison code holds expectations for men which encourage violence and the burying of emotions, both of which are very harmful (Haney 2003; Laws 2019; Sykes and Messinger 1960). These expectations originate from hegemonic

masculine ideals in society, which are spread through cultural norms, pop-culture, and institutions (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Therefore, change must take place outside of prisons if we expect to work towards change inside of prisons. At a societal level, strategies to address this issue could focus on deconstructing masculine expectations which are connected to violence and aggression (Berke and Zeichner 2016). Learned reactions to stress and conflict should be restructured so that society values communication and problem solving, rather than violence. Early research by Bird (1996) demonstrated that society's goal should be the *degenderization* of meanings, so that damaging traits reinforced through hegemonic masculinity end as the criteria in which males are measured as men.

Recent research has examined how to work towards the goal of the degenderization of meanings. For instance, Amin and colleagues (2018) examined various interventions which have sought to transform gender role perceptions, and their study found that the most promising intervention to change attitudes toward masculinity ideology are small group activities among youth to generate reflection about unequal gender norms and power relations. Amin and colleagues (2018) stated that in order to change masculine norms, boys must be motivated to challenge the power and privilege taught to them by society. Therefore, an action step could be to implement small group activities in schools for young children, and then continue this through classroom discussions as they age. By setting aside time in the classroom to have these discussions, harmful masculine expectations can be continuously attacked.

Therefore, whether a relationship between the prison code and program participation is found or not, work needs to be done at the societal level. While it is

not a simple or quick task to change societal norms, initiating change is possible by taking initial, feasible steps, such as implementing activities in school. Although it may take time, widespread attention needs to be continually drawn to the harmful effects brought about by hegemonic masculinity. Instead of pop-culture and institutions reinforcing toxic masculine ideals, they need to instead shift their depiction of men as communicative and praised for showing emotions.

Limitations

It is important to first note the impact of geography on the proposed study. Because the study is only examining prisons in Maryland, the results may not be generalizable to all prison locations. The geographical location of Maryland may pull inmates predominantly from areas surrounding Maryland. In turn, this may influence the masculine expectations these men grew up with and their masculine ideologies (Bonds 2009; Moran 2013). Further, 69 percent of the inmates in Maryland prisons are Black individuals (Vera Institute of Justice 2019). This racial makeup may affect the findings of this study because research shows that race impacts masculine expectations (Cazenave 1984; Duneier 2015; Shaw and Tan 2014). White men historically have higher educations and incomes than Black men and have not faced the marginalization that Black men have experienced (Chaney 2009). This has led many Black men to modify expectations for their own manhood. For instance, a study by Chaney (2009) found that Black men put a stronger emphasis on independence and self-sufficiency in their definitions of masculinity than other races. A study by Nandi (2002) found that this can translate into prison masculinity. Therefore, the

described prison code and programming affects found in this study may differ from findings in prisons in other geographical locations.

The geography of prisons also impacts the prevalence of prison gangs. A limitation to this proposed study is that it does not examine prison gangs. Due to the competitive and aggressive nature of prison gangs, they may affect inmates' views of the prison code and inmates' attitudes and behaviors. Research shows that many inmates join prison gangs as a source of protection, a sense of identity, and heightened status (Skarbek 2012; Wood, Alleyne, Mozova, and James 2014). Therefore, the reasons for joining a prison gang are in line with the prison code's values of violence and status. However, this study does not examine the differences of the effects of the prison code on prison gang and non-gang inmates. Further, there is often conflict between gangs, which likely creates further rules and expectations among inmates. Gangs are also often formed along racial and cultural lines, which additionally creates distinctions in masculine behavioral expectations (Skarbek 2012). Although prison gangs are not examined in this study, future research should analyze the relationship between prison gangs and rehabilitation.

Lastly, this proposed study does not address how the prison code affects inmates' participation and engagement within programs, once they are already in them. The study only examines the initial entrance into a program. This is an important factor to consider because simply attending a prison program is not enough to rehabilitate (Daggett 2008). Instead, inmates need to actively work on themselves. If the prison code blocks their effective engagement, then access to programs is not sufficient (Morse and Wright 2022). This was demonstrated in a study by Morse and

Wright (2022), who reported that all the inmates interviewed agreed that masculine expectations indirectly influence the ability to engage successfully in programs. The study showed that even if an inmate decided to participate in a program, his masculine expectations of not being vulnerable would likely impact *how* he participated in the program.

Future Directions

It is important for future research to extend beyond the homogeneous lens of this proposed study and examine individual differences between inmates. Although all men face consequences from the existence of hegemonic masculinity, the extent, and ways in which it affects them, varies based on individual factors and beliefs (Fontaine 2019). For instance, there are many racial group and cultural differences in the definition of masculinity, which affects how men of different cultures are socialized to behave (Cazenave 1984; Duneier 2015; Shaw and Tan 2014). Furthermore, one's socioeconomic group impacts the way they are socialized to become a man, as well as impacts the types of challenges they experience (Cazenave 1984; Newcomb, Huba, and Bentler 1981; Sweeney 2014). Therefore, there is not one universal definition of masculinity. Consequently, these various definitions of masculinity follow males as they enter prison, which may impact their behavioral and attitudinal responses to the prison code.

Aside from varying definitions of masculinity, there is also variation in how strongly men adhere to gender role norms, called masculine ideology (Pleck, Sonenstein, and Ku 1993). Masculine ideology is significant both within society, as it impacts the extent to which men are influenced by hegemonic masculine ideals, as

well as in prisons, as it impacts the extent to which inmates adhere to, and are impacted by, the prison code. It is important to address the influence of masculine ideology because it may cause some inmates to be less worried about conforming to the prison code. The differential experiences of inmates with different masculine ideologies should be further studied to fully understand the impacts of expectations set by the prison code.

Finally, this proposed study does not analyze the experiences of LGBTQ, intersex, and non-binary individuals in prison. As a result of the varying stereotypes and expectations that come along with their identities, these inmates undergo unique experiences in prison. Therefore, important voices are missing from this study. It is imperative for future research to analyze how the prison code differentially affects these individuals because research shows there to be a disproportionate number of threats and victimization to LGBTQ, intersex, and nonbinary inmates in male prisons (Ratkalkar and Atkin-Plunk 2020). As a whole, there has been an increase in literature looking at the experiences of these inmates (Jenness and Fenstermaker 2014; Sexton, Jenness, and Sumner 2010; Stohr 2015; Sumner 2010; Wooden 2012; Yap et al. 2020). However, research has not adequately examined how masculine expectations within a male prison influences their ability to rehabilitate.

Conclusion

The proposed study aims to examine whether inmates feel deterred from participating in prison programs as a consequence of the masculine expectations set by the prison code. Programs are used in prisons to rehabilitate inmates and address the challenges they face that lead to criminal behavior. Mental health, anger

management, education, and vocational and work programs are a few of the most common and generalizable programs, as each of them are offered in over 75 percent of the United States' public, private, and federal prisons. These programs aim to provide inmates with resources for success upon reentry. Nonetheless, if inmates feel blocked from accessing these resources, their likelihood of rehabilitation, and then a successful reentry, is significantly reduced. Therefore, determining barriers to prison programs is essential when thinking about offender rehabilitation.

It is imperative that the gap in research between offender rehabilitation and masculine expectations is addressed because findings can lead to the initiation of important first steps in addressing harmful masculine expectations. At the societal level, awareness of the dangerous consequences of toxic masculinity should be spread. The image and stereotypes of men displayed in pop culture should be re-shaped to include the positive expectations men should strive to achieve. At the correctional level, findings from this study can lead to important further research and policy implications. This can initiate change in the hypermasculine prison culture.

Appendix: Sample Questions

Background Questions

- How old are you?
- What are you incarcerated for?
- How long is your sentence?
- How long have you been incarcerated in this prison for?
- Have you ever served time in prison before this sentence?
    - If yes, was it a different prison?
        - How many years were you incarcerated for?

Prison Code

- Can you describe the informal rules of this prison?
    - How are you supposed to behave?
    - How are you supposed to look?
    - How are you supposed to feel?
- How do these rules shape the definition of manliness in prison?
- Can you describe how these rules are learned by new inmates?
- Can you describe how these rules are enforced?
- What happens if you don't follow these rules?
- Are the rules enforced the same for all inmates?
- Does the number of years you are incarcerated for impact the expectations set for you?
- What encompasses a model prisoner?

- Is there a hierarchy of inmates?
    - How is this formed?
    - How would you describe those who are at the top and bottom?
    - How does this shape interactions between inmates?

Masculinity

- How would you personally define the expectations of being a man?
    - Does your definition change when being in society and when being in prison?
        - If so, how?
- How do you think other inmates define the expectations of being a man?
- How does the prison culture affect how you feel you have to look and behave?
- Do you ever feel like you have to hide your vulnerabilities in prison?
    - If yes, explain some of these situations.
- How do you believe you are supposed to react when someone threatens your identity/ status?
    - Has this happened to you? Explain.
- What do you feel threatened by?

Individual Participation in Prison Programs

- What programs do you know of that are offered in this prison?
- Have you ever voluntarily participated in a prison program? (a program that you were not required to attend)

    - If so, which one(s)?
        - What caused you to want to participate?
        - Were you afraid of what others would think about your participation?
    - If not, why?
- Have you ever felt blocked from participation in a program?
    - If so, why?
        - Explain the barriers.

General Population's Participation in Prison Programs

- Would you say a lot of people participate in voluntary prison programs?
- What are the general attitudes held towards programs?
    - By other inmates?
    - By correctional staff?

Prison Code's Impact on Participation in Prison Programs

- Do you think the culture and informal rules of prison discourages program participation?
    - If yes, explain how you've witnessed this?
- Have you ever felt personally discouraged from participation in a voluntary program by other inmates?
    - Explain the situation.

- Do you feel discouraged from participating in certain programs more than others?
- What programs would you want to participate in if you didn't have to worry about inmates' perceptions of you?
- Rank the acceptableness of: 1) mental health services; 2) anger management programs; 3) education programs; 4) employment and vocational programs
    - Explanation?
    - How do inmates react if they hear of someone attending each of these programs?

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