

Abstract

Title of Thesis: DOING GENDER, DOING TIME AND DOING BETTER:
DIFFERENCES IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PRISON
EDUCATION

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This study examines gender differences in educational participation and completion among incarcerated individuals using the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates. Given the broader societal trends in education and drawing on “doing gender,” importation, and deprivation theories, I hypothesize that women will be more likely than men to participate in and complete educational programs. The goal of the research is to ascertain whether current educational differences between men and women, where women dominate the educational sphere outside of prison, also occur within the carceral setting. Results show that being a female inmate is associated with a 6 to 10 percentage point higher likelihood of participating in educational programs compared to males. Female inmates also had a 1 to 3 percentage point increase in the likelihood of completing these courses. The study highlights how importation and deprivation factors shape participation and completion, with gender influencing how these experiences manifest. While both men and women value education for personal growth and future opportunities, the findings emphasize the importance of equitable access to educational resources in prisons. These results highlight the need for inclusive policies that address the specific educational needs of incarcerated women and support their successful reintegration into society.

**DOING GENDER, DOING TIME AND DOING BETTER: DIFFERENCES IN
WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PRISON EDUCATION**

By

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Dedication

To my parents, who never even knew to dream for this moment.

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Introduction

Education serves as a catalyst for upward mobility and a pathway to empowerment (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Historically, limiting education has been used as a tool to oppress women, reinforcing their marginalization in society (Buchmann et al., 2008). For centuries, educational opportunities were largely reserved for men, while women were often denied access to formal schooling (Hadjar & Buchmann, 2016). However, this dynamic has dramatically shifted over time. Gender parity in enrollment in the U.S. was reached in primary and lower secondary education by 2009, and in 2013, upper secondary education achieved gender parity (UNESCO, 2024). Today, women outpace men in nearly every facet of the educational sphere, from earning higher grades and participating more in extracurricular activities, to surpassing men in academic achievement and degree completion (McDaniel, 2012).

Given these broader trends of women's success in education, this study aims to examine whether similar patterns exist within the prison system. Feminist scholars contend that this phenomenon, of women surpassing men academically in traditional schooling, should be examined through the frameworks of "doing gender" and "hegemonic masculinity," two contemporary gender theories (Morris, 2011). These theories explore how gender is actively constructed and maintained in society, with "hegemonic masculinity" referring to the dominant position of men and the societal pressures to conform to traditional masculine ideals. This lens is particularly relevant to understanding gender differences in education outside prison, where societal norms and expectations about gender shape educational outcomes. However, the key difference in this study is that it focuses on the prison environment. While "doing gender" is still useful for understanding gendered dynamics in prison, it is influenced by the all-encompassing nature of the correctional setting. Therefore, deprivation and importation theories, which are

specifically designed for the prison context and have been widely used to study prison programming, provide a stronger theoretical foundation for understanding education in this unique environment.

Building on the established theories of deprivation and importation, this study explores how both the institutional environment of prison and the pre-incarceration characteristics of individuals shape their likelihood of participating in and completing educational activities. Deprivation theory suggests that the prison environment itself, through limited resources and restricted access to programs, impacts prisoners' behaviors, while importation theory highlights the influence of prisoners' histories and personal traits on their adaptation to prison life (Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958; Goffman, 1961; Irwin & Cressey, 1962). Originally developed with a focus on white male prisoners, these theories have since been shown to apply to a diverse range of individuals (Kelly-Corless, 2022; Kelly-Corless & McCarthy, 2025; Crewe et al., 2017; Zaitzow, 2003). In particular, gendered deprivation and importation theories highlight the unique ways in which women experience suffering in prison, noting that their concerns, paths to incarceration, and experiences within the prison culture differ significantly from those of men (Carlen, 1998; Carlen & Worrall, 2013; Crewe, et al., 2017; Leigey, 2019; Thomas, 2003; Zaitzow, 2003). By combining these frameworks, this study explores how gender interacts with both structural and individual-level factors to shape educational participation in prison.

Utilizing data from the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates, this research aims to identify and understand the factors that may increase women's likelihood of participating in and completing prison education programs compared to men. Given the broader societal trends where women increasingly outpace men in educational attainment, this research seeks to determine whether similar patterns are evident within the carceral setting.

Education in prison is recognized as a critical tool for fostering positive outcomes both during incarceration and after. Therefore, understanding who participates in these programs and why, is crucial for shaping policies that ensure equitable access to opportunities for all incarcerated individuals. By investigating the differences in educational participation and completion between men and women in prison, this thesis not only contributes to the literature on gender and education outside of prison but to studies on prison programming as well. Ultimately, this study will provide insights into the gendered experiences of incarcerated students, shedding light on the ways in which incarcerated women and men navigate their identities, aspirations, and opportunities within a highly structured and restrictive environment.

Literature Review

I. Theoretical Framework

Deprivation and Importation Theories

Participation in prison activities, including educational programs, is often viewed as a critical method of adapting to incarceration (Dhami et al., 2007). Since the mid-20th century, two dominant theories have emerged to explain how prisoners adapt to their imprisonment: the deprivation and importation models. These frameworks continue to be relevant in understanding the experiences of incarcerated individuals, particularly in the context of prison education.

The deprivation model, first introduced by Clemmer (1940), posits that the prison environment itself shapes inmates' behavior. Clemmer's concept of "prisonization" describes how prisoners internalize the norms, values, and culture of the prison as a way of coping with their situation. Sykes (1958) later expanded on this idea by identifying the "pains of

imprisonment,” which include the loss of liberty, goods and services, autonomy, security, and access to heterosexual relationships. These deprivations can lead to a "mortification of the self," as described by Goffman (1961), where the institutional environment strips prisoners of their pre-existing social identities. In this framework, prisoners' adjustment to confinement is shaped by the structural and environmental conditions of the prison itself.

Critics argue that deprivation theory offers a narrow perspective. Prisons do not function in isolation but exist within a broader societal context. The theory also fails to account for the fact that, even in the same environment, prisoners develop diverse adaptations to their circumstances. Feminist critiques, such as those from McQuaide & Ehrenreich (1998), emphasize that women in prison should not be treated as a monolithic group with uniform experiences. Deprivation theory, by grouping all prisoners as a homogenous population, risks overlooking individual-level differences and needs. There are also methodological concerns with the application of deprivation theory in research. The theory often requires that different prisons be compared to one another, which may not always be logistically feasible. Additionally, this perspective largely ignores the active ways prisoners cope with their environment. While there is extensive research on men's experiences of deprivation, there is limited research on the prison-specific coping mechanisms of incarcerated women.

In contrast, the importation model, developed by Irwin and Cressey (1962), suggests that inmates bring their social histories, personal characteristics, and pre-prison experiences with them into the correctional environment. Rather than viewing the prison as a closed system, this model emphasizes the ways in which both the outside world and the internal world of prison continually interact with one another. In this perspective, external factors, such as education level, socioeconomic status, and prior trauma, determine how prisoners adapt to confinement.

According to this theory, participation in prison activities, including education, is shaped by these pre-existing individual differences (Cao et al., 1997).

Critics argue that this perspective shifts attention away from the structural and environmental issues within prisons. By categorizing importation factors as risk factors, the distinction between an individual's needs and their perceived likelihood of reoffending becomes blurred, placing the burden of rehabilitation on the prisoner rather than the system (Fedock, 2017). This emphasis on individual traits rather than institutional conditions can have serious consequences, particularly for incarcerated women, as it may contribute to longer sentences or stricter classifications under the assumption that these factors indicate a higher risk of recidivism (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003).

While early studies positioned deprivation and importation models as competing theories, over time, scholars have moved beyond this, recognizing that these theories are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. An integrated approach considers both institutional conditions and individual backgrounds as key influences on prisoner behavior and adaptation. Rather than viewing prisoners as either wholly shaped by their environment or entirely bringing external traits into prison, this perspective acknowledges the dynamic interaction between pre-incarceration experiences and prison conditions in shaping outcomes (Thomas, 1977; Dobbs & Courtney, 2005). Research in this area highlights that prisoners respond differently to incarceration based on both their past experiences and the institutional setting. For example, individuals with prior trauma or substance use disorders may struggle more with incarceration, but the way in which these difficulties manifest is also shaped by factors such as prison overcrowding and access to rehabilitative programs. Brosens et al. (2016) investigated inmate participation in prison activities by using a deprivation model, an importation model, and an

integrated model. They found that the deprivation model provided a stronger explanation for participation compared to the importation model. However, the most comprehensive understanding emerged from the integrated model that acknowledged the influence of both prison deprivations and individual backgrounds. This reinforces the idea that no single model fully accounts for inmate behavior, and that a more holistic framework offers the best explanation for participation in prison activities.

The present study adopts an integrated framework that combines deprivation and importation theories to analyze gendered participation in prison education. The combination of these theories offers valuable insights into the structural and individual-level factors that shape educational outcomes within prison. Conditions associated with deprivation theory, such as limited program availability, work assignments, and disciplinary infractions, can hinder participation in educational programs. In contrast, factors associated with importation theory, including gendered educational experiences, and parental responsibilities, shape prisoners' motivation and capacity to engage in education (Brosens et al., 2016; Dhami et al., 2007). By examining both the environmental constraints of the prison setting and the pre-incarceration experiences that women bring with them, this research seeks to uncover the unique barriers and opportunities influencing women's prison education.

Viewing Gender through "Doing Gender"

While this study primarily utilizes deprivation and importation theories to analyze prison education, the concept of “doing gender” provides an important supplementary framework for understanding the role of gender dynamics in shaping educational outcomes. The term “doing gender” was coined by Candance West and Don Zimmerman in their 1987 article under the same

title. They define gender not as social roles or social displays described by Goffman (1976), but as something that occurs through social interaction. This does not involve simply following a script of mandated behaviors but requires a person to adapt to different situations. This behavior will then be assessed by others as gender appropriate or gender inappropriate. Therefore, one cannot “do gender” alone, the interaction with society and institutions is necessary. Since society is structured with a strong emphasis on the division between men and women, and individuals are constantly evaluated based on their gendered behaviors, it is impossible to avoid "doing gender." Although differences between men and women are not biologically innate, “doing gender” allows for these divides to present themselves and masquerade as “natural.”

Doing Gender Theory was then expanded by Candance West and Sarah Fenstermaker in 1995 with the article “Doing Difference.” This article presented an intersectional approach to the idea of “doing gender” and proposed that gender performance is also affected by race and class. The authors argue that race and class are not innate but a product of interaction similar to gender. However, there are societal expectations and classifications of those in certain racial or class categories, therefore, people are tasked with “doing differences” in unique ways depending on their unique identity.

This lens is particularly relevant to understanding gender differences in education outside prison, where societal norms and expectations about gender shape access to opportunities, participation rates, and outcomes. For example, women have, in recent times, outpaced men in educational attainment, a trend that reflects broader societal structures and expectations. In this context, “doing gender” helps explain how gendered identities and behaviors contribute to these differences. This theory has been adopted by contemporary feminist scholars as the premiere way of understanding and explaining gender gaps in education (Morris, 2011). However, this

study focuses particularly on women's education while they are in prison. When applied to the carceral setting, the explanatory power of “doing gender” must be put into context of the broader phenomena associated with incarceration. Prisons are total institutions (Goffman, 1961), where the environment and institutional structures exert an overwhelming influence on individuals’ behaviors and opportunities. The gendered dynamics of “doing gender” do not disappear within prison walls but are mediated by the all-encompassing nature of the correctional environment. For this reason, deprivation and importation theories, which are specifically focused on the prison context, offer a stronger theoretical foundation for understanding participation in prison education.

In this study, “doing gender” functions as a way to understand gender itself and as a lens to acknowledge the ways gendered dynamics persist within the prison environment and influence education. However, given the unique nature of incarceration, the focus shifts to how these dynamics intersect with the structural and individual-level factors described by deprivation and importation theories. This discussion will be expanded in the following sections, which delve deeper into the ways gendered norms and practices interact with the prison context to shape academic achievement.

Gendered Deprivation and Importation

Theories of deprivation and importation, despite originating over seventy years ago with a focus on white male prisoners, have since been expanded to account for diverse prison populations. Scholars have demonstrated that while these theories can be applied to individuals outside the "default" identity of young, white, able-bodied men, the processes of deprivation and importation function differently across demographic groups. Kelly-Corless & McCarthy (2025)

use an intersectional lens to argue that the importation and deprivation models serve as valuable theoretical tools for understanding the experiences of incarcerated individuals who diverge from the traditionally studied population.

To understand gendered importation and deprivation theories, it is crucial to recognize oppression as both an imported characteristic and as a consequence of the prison environment. The prison system, designed with the assumption of the “default” inmate, reflects broader societal inequalities (Ellis, 2021). This imported oppression then converges with the structural deprivations of the prison environment, exacerbating its impact and further entrenching disparities (Ellis, 2021; Kelly-Corless, 2022). Ellis (2021) further asserts that while the total institution serves as a theoretical foundation, it does not separate the most economically and socially disadvantaged individuals from society. Instead, it intensifies their preexisting struggles within a highly controlled and punitive environment that remains deeply connected to the broader social world.

Scholars examining women's experiences in prison emphasize that they endure the pains of imprisonment differently and more intensely than men because prisons have never been designed for their needs (Kelly-Corless & McCarthy, 2025). The gendered nature of incarceration exacerbates the challenges women face, as the system struggles to accommodate them (Bosworth, 2003; Crewe et al., 2017; Thomas, 2003; Zaitzow, 2003). Women in prison experience both deprivation and importation through a gendered lens, with imprisonment existing within a broader framework of gendered power relations. Zaitzow (2003) describes this as "doing gender" while "doing time," reinforcing how deeply gender structures prison experiences. Studies highlight imported characteristics that disproportionately impact female prisoners, including histories of victimization, mental illness, and substance misuse, which create

additional layers of hardship (Carlen, 1998; Carlen & Worrall, 2013; Crewe et al., 2017; Leigey, 2019; Thomas, 2003; Zaitzow, 2003). Research on women and criminality reveals that women, especially those on the margins of society, often experience a multiplicity of abuses; particularly sexual abuse, which plays a significant role in shaping their pathways into criminality (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2013). Crewe et al. (2017) found that women serving life sentences in England and Wales disclosed trauma with greater intensity and consistency than their male counterparts, reflecting the unique paths that brought them into prison and the unique challenges that they bring with them. This pre-existing trauma shapes their adaptation to incarceration, making imprisonment not just an experience of confinement, but an extension of prior oppression and abuse.

While deprivation theory focuses on the experience of life inside prison, research shows that incarceration is markedly different for men and women. Men's prisons tend to be racially divided, with strict adherence to the convict code and an individualistic, often violent culture (Thomas, 2003; Rafter, 1985). In contrast, women's prisons have always appeared to be less conflict-oriented and more group-focused, with horizontally structured social systems that emphasize familial roles and interpersonal relationship (Wooldredge, 2020; Wright, 2018; Bartels & Gaffney, 2011; Williams, 2017; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965; Giallombardo, 1966; Heffernan, 1972). Owen's (1998) ethnographic study of a women's prison, *In the Mix: Struggle and Survival in a Women's Prison*, reveals significant differences in how women navigate incarceration. She identifies a distinction between women who are "in the mix," which includes engaging in trouble, drama, and drug use, and those who stay out of it. Interviews with incarcerated women consistently highlight routine and programming, particularly work assignments and educational courses, as key factors in maintaining stability and purpose while

incarcerated. Owen found that educational programming played a critical role in enabling women to stay out of trouble and resist destructive behavioral patterns.

Owen's research further supports both importation and deprivation theories in women's prisons. She observed that inmates' pre-prison experiences profoundly influenced their prison lives, aligning with importation theory. Simultaneously, deprivation theory is evident in the way women adapt to the conditions imposed upon them. The intersection of patriarchal influences, economic and social marginalization, and the unique stigmatization of female criminality shapes both their offenses and their experiences behind bars. Like Crewe et al. (2017), Owen identifies themes of privacy, power, and intimate relationships as uniquely salient concerns for incarcerated women. One of the most prominent themes in Owen's study is the centrality of children in incarcerated women's lives. Female prisoners are more likely to be parents, have custody of their children, and communicate with their children than male prisoners (Loper et al., 2009; Poehlmann et al., 2009; Powell & Nolan, 2003; Mumola, 2000). Given their higher likelihood of parenthood and stronger emotional ties to their children, reconnecting with their kids becomes a primary motivator for many women's behavior inside prison (Baranger et al. 2018). Spark & Harris (2005) found that women particularly saw prison education as a way to reunite with their families, especially their children. These sentiments are less likely to be observed in men, who are more likely to "cut loose" their families while incarcerated, while women often see reunification with their children as their primary goal (Fishman, 1990; Poehlmann et al. 2010; Dyer et al. 2012). This desire serves as a form of informal social control, motivating women to "do better" and to "do their time" constructively to prepare for release.

Owen's findings underscore the importance of institutional programming in women's prisons. Women who had histories of abuse, repeated incarcerations, substance use, and poverty

were more likely to be "in the mix." Their behaviors prior to incarceration continued inside, reinforcing importation theory. However, those who engaged in educational and vocational programs were better able to stay out of trouble and break these behavioral cycles. The consistency of this finding suggests that programming may be even more crucial in women's prisons than in men's (McCorkle, 2013). Education and structured activities not only help incarcerated women cope with the pains of imprisonment but also provide them with the tools to alter the behavior that led to their incarceration in the first place. Thus, prison education programs can be understood as both an adaptation strategy and as a means of long-term self-improvement, reinforcing the need for accessible and gender-responsive prison education initiatives.

II. Gender Differences in Education Outside Prison

For centuries, educational opportunities were largely reserved for men, while women were systematically excluded from formal schooling (Hadjar & Buchmann, 2016). In early U.S. history, access to education was tied to broader societal norms that dictated rigid gender roles. The prevailing expectation was for women to prioritize domestic responsibilities such as marriage, motherhood, and household management rather than pursue academic or professional goals (Morris, 2011). Educational systems were structured to reflect these roles, with women's education often limited to basic literacy, religious instruction, and skills deemed useful for managing a household, such as sewing or cooking (Barthel, 1985; Conway, 1974). Institutions like finishing schools, which taught etiquette and "wife training," perpetuated the idea that women's intellectual and professional development was secondary to their social and domestic obligations (Jenny, 2018).

White men, on the other hand, were actively encouraged to pursue education as a means to secure professional careers, accumulate wealth, and attain social status (Wrigley, 2003). Schools and universities were tailored to prepare men for leadership roles in politics, science, business, and other fields that were considered prestigious (Hugo, 1990). This gendered division of educational access reinforced patriarchal power structures by limiting women's capacity to enter and compete in the public and professional arenas (Wrigley, 2003).

This history is rooted in the systemic oppression faced by Black men and women in the U.S., whose humanity, along with their access to education, was long denied. Slaves were forbidden to read and write, and after the Civil War, freed African Americans saw education as essential to their freedom and progress (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Despite setbacks such as segregation and violence, they persisted in establishing schools, culminating in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Education became a powerful tool for self-improvement and empowerment in African American communities (Collins, 1990).

The 19th and 20th centuries marked a significant shift with the rise of gender equality movements. The women's suffrage movement, the push for coeducation, and legislation like Title IX (1972), which prohibited sex-based discrimination in federally funded educational institutions, helped break down barriers to women's education (Forseth, 1995; Solomon, 1985). The educational experiences of African American girls and women were shaped by these movements. Influential legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX helped reduce racial and gender discrimination, and advocates for Black women's education believed that uplifting them would uplift the entire race (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Educated Black women played a vital role in advancing their communities, with several founding schools and colleges

for Black girls and women (Perkins, 1996). As women gained increased access to educational opportunities, they began to excel academically at an almost exponential rate.

Gender parity in education has been a long-sought goal globally, and in the United States. Significant strides have been made toward equalizing access to education. By 2009, gender parity in enrollment was achieved in primary and lower secondary education, marking a critical milestone in leveling the playing field for boys and girls (UNESCO, 2024). This progress extended to upper secondary education by 2013, reflecting a societal shift toward recognizing the importance of education for both genders. Over the past century, there has been significant progress in educational attainment among African American adults. While only 12% had graduated from high school and just 2% from college in earlier decades, recent data show that 72% have completed high school and 14.3% have earned a college degree (Diamond, 2006).

In more recent years, not only has the gender gap in education been closed, but there has been a reversal of this trend. Buchmann et al. (2008) reviewed gender differences in schools and found that boys were more likely to drop out, be suspended or expelled, be held back a grade, be diagnosed with learning disabilities, read at a lower grade level, and overall have lower grades than girls. Women also outpace men in higher education as well, with women attending and completing college more so than men (Peter & Horn, 2005). These gender differences in education are even more pronounced among working-class and minority groups (Mead, 2006). The academic achievement gap between African American male and female students is the largest gender gap across all racial and ethnic groups (Jackson & Holzman, 2020). In higher education, although Black women outpace men in college enrollment and completion, this success can obscure the racism and sexism they still face. An underlying issue that has persisted for over two centuries is the continued inequality in the educational experiences of African

American students. Despite the landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, African American children, both girls and boys, still face a system that remains separate and unequal. Research consistently shows significant disparities between Black and White students, especially regarding access to well-qualified teachers, rigorous curricula, smaller class sizes, updated technology, and well-maintained school facilities (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Diamond, 2006).

Following the initial observational studies on educational disparities between the sexes, many researchers turned their focus to examining the unexpected reversal of the trend and identifying its underlying causes. This shift has sparked considerable scholarly interest, as it represents a dramatic departure from centuries of male dominance in educational attainment. Gurian and Stevens (2005) proposed a biological framework, asserting that men possess inherent traits that make them more aggressive, physical, and impulsive, while also suggesting that they have a diminished capacity for sustained focus compared to women. This perspective implies that the traditional classroom environment, which emphasizes listening, attentiveness, and careful reflection, inherently favors the skills and behaviors typically associated with women and girls.

Some scholars questioned why women put so much effort into achieving educational goals if in the end, women are still paid less and hired less than men. Mickelson (1989) considers this the “anomaly of women’s achievement” and uses the sex role socialization hypothesis to explain the gap in education. This hypothesis asserts that women are socialized into a feminine role which is conducive to academic success. Other utilizations of sex role socialization come out of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework which asserts that boys and girls are situated to consume different types and quantities of cultural capital (1990). For example, Dumais (2002)

found that girls were more likely to participate in extracurricular activities that foster educational success.

The biological approach to understanding the gender gap in education is patently deterministic and static. While the socialization approaches bypass this biological reductionism, they fail to acknowledge how socialization can change throughout the life course. Both approaches are descriptive and do not explain the emergence of these gender differences. Morris (2011), attempts to understand the current gap in education using the “doing gender” lens. This perspective sees gender as an outcome rather than innate characteristic. Gender is produced through continual interaction with others. Therefore, when looking at gender differences in education, it is about looking at how gendered behavior impacts academics rather than viewing gender as already having a predetermined effect. The author states that viewing the interaction of education and gender through “doing gender” and hegemonic masculinity is the best tool we have at fully understanding the phenomenon. Hegemonic masculinity is a type of masculinity that is considered the ideal, and the most aligned with strength and toughness. Hegemonic masculinity is the antithesis of femininity and sees itself as superior to it. This positioning of superiority sometimes results in ironic consequences. Men may feel the need to express themselves through sports, fighting, or crime, and not through academics which results in physical injury, lower grades, and higher incarceration rates. Messerschmidt (2000) describes how many of the acts associated with crime are also associated with masculinity. The author argues that crime may be an avenue for men to “do masculinity” and reinforce their manhood. These men may see school as being less important since it does not align with their idealizations of masculinity.

When shifting the focus to gendered education within the prison setting, simply looking at the literature on traditional education provides several important insights, but also reveals the limitations of applying these frameworks directly. The literature has shown that the gender gap in education is most prominent among working-class minorities, the largest demographic within the incarcerated population (Mead, 2006; Jeffers, 2022; Jackson & Holzman, 2020). The research has found a correlation between men who do not value education and men who commit crime (Messerschmidt, 2000; Morris, 2011). Additionally, evidence suggests that men are less likely to engage in academic extracurricular activities (Dumais, 2002; McDaniel, 2012). Incarceration would likely compound this disparity, as prison culture often reinforces hegemonic masculinity, which prioritizes toughness and dominance over intellectual pursuit. This raises a critical question: do these gender gaps in education persist within the carceral system?

To answer the question, it must be acknowledged that the unique cultural, structural, and institutional dynamics within prisons often shape how gendered education gaps manifest. Prisons act as microcosms of society, but with heightened levels of power dynamics, institutional control, and a unique subculture (Ellis, 2021). Men's and women's prisons differ significantly in how gender is expressed, and this dynamic often leads to an amplification, or a reversal of gender displays compared to the outside world (Wooldredge, 2020; Wright, 2018; Bartels & Gaffney, 2011; Williams, 2017; Owen, 1998; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965; Giallombardo, 1966). In male prisons, hegemonic masculinity may dominate (Thomas, 2003; Heffernan, 1972; Rafter, 1985). In contrast, women's prisons may allow for more nuanced expressions of femininity, even if those align with a different set of cultural norms than those found outside prison walls (Owen, 1998; McCorkle, 2013; Ellis, 2023). These distinctions make it clear that theories rooted in external, societal gender roles need to be adapted or expanded to account for how gender is

reshaped, reinforced, or contested within the carceral context. Therefore, to more effectively understand and address gendered education in this setting, I move beyond traditional educational theories and consider more relevant frameworks, such as deprivation and importation theories.

III. The Role of Education in Prisons

Prison education has been embedded in the penal system since its inception, with early reformers, including the Quakers, advocating for its role in personal transformation (Morris & Rothman, 1998). Some supported religious instruction to instill moral values, while others emphasized labor and discipline as tools for rehabilitation. Additionally, some believed that incarceration itself could serve as an educational experience, fostering self-reflection and reform. Though prison education became more widespread in the twentieth century, its roots trace back to the early 1800s, when reformers introduced innovative programs to support incarcerated individuals (Behan, 2021). By the twenty-first century, prison education had evolved into a global practice, with nearly every jurisdiction implementing some form of educational programming.

In the 1980s, scholars began documenting the experiences of Black men within the education system and the criminal justice system, highlighting their heightened risk of school failure and incarceration, as well as their declining representation in higher education and stable employment (Gibbs, 1988; Hare & Castenell, 1985). The rise of mass incarceration disproportionately affected Black men, many of whom were more likely to be uneducated and imprisoned. This compounded their marginalization, underscoring the crucial importance of educational opportunities in prison as a means to rehabilitate individuals and break cycles of oppression. Education has long been a central theme in the lives, struggles, and aspirations of

Black Americans, regarded as a key pathway to attaining first-class citizenship and equality (Collier-Thomas, 1982).

Participation in prison activities such as educational programs, vocational training, sports, and cultural activities, have been widely recognized for its positive effects on incarcerated individuals. Research has linked participation in these programs to reduced recidivism (Kim & Clark, 2013), improved literacy skills (Greenberg et al., 2007), increased well-being and social capital (Digennaro, 2010), and better post-release employment outcomes (Lawrence et al., 2002). Despite these well-documented benefits, much of the existing literature focuses on the characteristics of participants rather than examining what differentiates participants from non-participants.

Some studies have applied the importation and deprivation models to predict participation in prison programs. Dhimi et al. (2007) examined the effects of time spent in prison (a deprivation variable) and quality of life before incarceration (an importation variable) on inmates' adaptation to prison life. One measure of adaptation was participation in prison activities. Their results indicate that participation was higher among prisoners who had a poor quality of life prior to incarceration and those who had been incarcerated for a longer period. Similarly, Brosens et al. (2016) sought to determine the factors influencing participation in prison activities, categorizing determinants into importation (individual characteristics) and deprivation (prison life characteristics). Conditions such as time served and visitation were used to represent deprivation and characteristics like gender, age, and quality of life before imprisonment were used to represent importation. Quality of life prior to incarceration was made up of several variables including education, having a partner, employment status and previous detention status. The study ultimately found that the combined effects of importation and

deprivation variables provided the most powerful explanation for participation in prison activities. Specifically, younger individuals, those without children, those who had been incarcerated longer, and those who received visitors were more likely to participate. However, one major limitation of the study was the small sample of women, which restricted the ability to draw conclusions about gender differences in participation.

There is a growing body of literature suggesting that prison education may play a role in the reentry process, particularly by increasing employability and reducing recidivism. Education in prison is often viewed as a tool to ease reentry and provide inmates with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the outside world (Mertanen & Brunila, 2017). Given that recidivism is closely tied to economic opportunity and social support, access to education can help break the revolving door of prison entry (Denney & Tynes, 2021). Manger et al. (2010) found that prisoners serving longer sentences were more likely to engage in educational programs, seeing them as a way to prepare for life after release. Additionally, a RAND study reported that participation in college courses while incarcerated reduced recidivism rates by 43 percent, concluding that education is a more cost-effective strategy for reducing reoffending than incarceration itself (Davis et al., 2013).

Despite these promising findings, the literature on prison education and its effects on recidivism presents mixed results. While research shows a correlation between prison education and reduced recidivism, most studies fall short of providing a direct causal relationship due to methodological limitations. Several studies focus on selective programs, such as higher education programs, which do not represent the majority of prison education offerings. Additionally, a major challenge in evaluating the effectiveness of prison education is self-selection bias. Inmates who choose to participate in educational programs may already possess

qualities that make them more likely to succeed after release, such as higher motivation or stronger social support systems (Gaes, 2008). This bias complicates efforts to isolate the true impact of prison education, making it difficult to determine whether positive outcomes stem from the program itself or the pre-existing characteristics of those who enroll (Ubah, 2002).

Another critique of the literature on prison education is that it primarily focuses on the benefits of reduced recidivism and increased employment opportunities. While these are meaningful advantages, scholars have increasingly been advocating for the identification of more nuanced and diverse benefits of prison education. Courtney (2019) found that incarcerated students had less disciplinary tickets while in prison on average than those who were not students. It has been shown that the isolating and repressive nature of the prison setting, which is typically seen as a part of an inmates' punishment, can paradoxically foster an environment where incarcerated students can flourish (Kallman, 2019). In a study focused on college programs within a female correctional facility, Fine et al. (2001) found strong support for educational programming among prison staff. Faculty members observed that students were more likely to demonstrate respectful behavior, adhere to rules, and experience positive shifts in their self-esteem. These improvements, coupled with the potential disqualification from academic programming for rule violations, contributed to a more peaceful and manageable environment.

Particularly for women, Spark and Harris (2005) found that women's motivations for participating in prison education were less focused on employment opportunities and more on coping with the present, fostering hope for the future, and maintaining familial connections. Education, in this context, promotes rehabilitation by enhancing mental and emotional health, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose, while reinforcing women's identities as mothers and

individuals. This broader impact of education, which supports resilience and community responsibility, often goes beyond the narrow policy focus on post-release outcomes, highlighting the more enduring benefits of prison education.

Despite the clear advantages of prison education, access to these programs remains inconsistent. Many correctional facilities fail to provide sufficient educational opportunities to meet the demand or do not offer them at all (Dewey et al., 2020). Barriers such as the Pell Grant ban and other policy restrictions further limit participation. For example, the strict eligibility criteria for financial aid, including citizenship status, lack of a high school diploma, and other disqualifications, prevent many inmates from accessing educational funding (Tahamont et al., 2020). Additionally, administrative hurdles, such as a rigorous application process and associated costs, may further discourage inmates from applying. These barriers highlight the distinct challenges faced by incarcerated individuals seeking education, which differ from those faced by students outside of prison.

To better understand the true effects of these programs, it is crucial to examine the factors that influence participation whose participation may be shaped by both structural conditions and individual characteristics (Knepper, 1990). Addressing these structural barriers to participation is essential for improving outcomes in prison education. By identifying and mitigating the obstacles that prevent inmates, especially women, from engaging in educational programs, policymakers and prison administrators can create more equitable and effective systems of prison education.

IV. Women's Participation in Prison Education

In 1923, penal reform advocate Kate Richards O'Hare published *In Prison*, a memoir detailing her experiences at Missouri State Penitentiary. In her account, O'Hare highlighted the lack of educational and vocational opportunities for incarcerated women, stating:

“There were no provisions in our prison for educational or vocational training. The women, at the expiration of their sentences, go out not only worn to physical depletion, but as illiterate and untrained as they entered. I found that about twenty percent could neither read nor write, and with few exceptions, the others had not finished the grade schools” (p. 93).

She also described the limited access to reading materials, noting that women were denied library privileges. In response, she advocated for them to receive at least one book per week from the already established men's library. Additionally, she formally requested permission from the prison board to establish a night school. She described the female inmates as being “pathetically eager for the opportunity to attend school” (p. 94). However, her request was ultimately denied. O'Hare's experience underscores the longstanding challenges of women's education in prison and serves as a harsh reminder that, despite over a century of prison reform efforts, many of these issues persist today.

Rafter (1983) traces the history of women's prisons from 1790 to 1980. She argues that the historical development of women's prisons has differed significantly from that of men's in terms of administrative structures, disciplinary tactics, inmate experiences, and access to education. These differences challenge the common perception of a monolithic prison system with a singular history. While educational opportunities for incarcerated men expanded in the

early 20th century, progress for women lagged behind. Early education efforts for incarcerated individuals primarily focused on religious instruction rather than formal academic training. By the time men's prisons began incorporating structured educational programs, women's prisons remained focused on punishment and rehabilitation through gendered expectations rather than academic or vocational development.

Early women's prisons were designed to punish or "treat" women for deviating from prescribed gender roles rather than to incarcerate felons of the same severity as in men's facilities (Rafter, 1985). Men's reformatories prioritized physical exercise, occupational training, and the cultivation of "manliness" to transform felons into productive citizens (Brockway, 1912). In contrast, women's reformatories emphasized domesticity, reinforcing the belief that female offenders had failed in their roles as "true women." While inmates attended school for several hours a day, most of their instruction focused on sewing, cooking, and domestic service.

It is crucial to recognize that these early reformatories largely excluded Black women (Rafter, 1985). The reform movement's mission was to "rescue and reform" fallen women, yet its leaders did not consider Black women as worthy of rehabilitation. As a result, the women's prison system in the late 19th and early 20th centuries became split: custodial institutions primarily held Black women, while reformatories served white women. This segregation further limited Black women's access to education and vocational training, depriving them of the limited benefits reformatory education offered.

By the early 1970s, incarcerated women began organizing and filing lawsuits to gain access to legal, educational, and vocational programs (Ernst, 2023). After multiple failed reform attempts, women turned to the federal courts to demand equal opportunities. In *Glover v.*

Johnson (1979), the court ruled that incarcerated women must have equal access to education and vocational training. However, states resisted meaningful reform. Rather than expanding educational opportunities for women, many states reduced programming in men's prisons, effectively eliminating courses for both men and women (Rafter, 1990). The prison system categorized reentry education as a "privilege" rather than a necessity, further justifying deprivation and neglect (Ernst, 2023).

The Institute for Lifelong Learning has noted that, given the overwhelming male majority in the prison population, penal and educational policies have historically been designed with men in mind (Behan, 2021). Scholars argue that prison systems, reflected in their architecture, rules, regulations, and hierarchies, are fundamentally masculine institutions that have historically overlooked the unique needs of incarcerated women. While the smaller number of incarcerated women has often been cited as a barrier to offering specialized educational programs, the lack of programming can also be attributed to systemic gender discrimination. Studies have continued to reveal gendered disparities in prison education. Surveys of women's prisons in the late 20th century found that educational programs still emphasized domestic skills and personal grooming, reinforcing traditional feminine stereotypes rather than providing career-oriented training (Rafter, 1985). Case and Fasnacht (2004) found that the only vocational training available to incarcerated women was for traditionally female-dominated occupations, such as office work and cosmetology. These findings illustrate that women's education in prison has historically revolved around performing femininity, rather than equipping women with the skills necessary for successful reintegration into society. By the early 21st century, reentry education in women's prisons remained critically underfunded.

Although prison education is available to women today, they have encountered distinct challenges in accessing it. From 1986 to 1997, there was a significant decline in participation. Rose (2004) suggests that this decline in women's participation was due to several factors. This includes elimination of Pell Grants in 1994, women's increasing prison population, and women's separation from their children. Due to the elimination of the Pell grants, there was a reduction in the number and range of post-secondary educational programs available. This is related to the decline of women's participation around that time, but it is not the full picture.

Women's incarceration rate has increased even more rapidly than men's. Over the last 40 years, women's incarceration rate increased by 834 percent which is more than double the rate of men's incarceration (Sawyer, 2018). This exponentially increasing population places additional strains on services provided in women's prisons which were already inadequate beforehand. While men encounter challenges related to educational opportunities during incarceration, female prisoners face their own unique challenges as they have access to fewer programs, and those that are available are often of lower quality (Ross & Fabiano, 1986; Janusz, 1991). This issue is compounded by the fact that female prisoners generally have a greater need for educational programming than their male counterparts (Austin & Irwin, 2001). The Great Recession exacerbated these issues further with even more cuts to prison programming (Brown & Bloom, 2018).

Separation from children is somewhat of a unique issue for incarcerated women. Many claim that it is the worst pain of their imprisonment and develop anxieties along with a decline in mental health due to this separation (Pollock, 2002; Owen, 1998). Women are more likely than men to have custody of their children prior to their incarceration and women are generally more committed to reuniting with them after release (Wood & Grasmick, 1999; Loper et al., 2009;

Poehlmann, 2009; Powell & Nolan, 2003; Dyer et al. 2012). Therefore, mothers are more likely to develop these anxieties compared to fathers. Rose (2004) suggested that, since children and visitation are significant concerns for female inmates, it is plausible that these factors likely impact their participation in educational programs. This hypothesis was then verified by Rose and Rose (2014) which found that receiving visits from children was the most significant predictor of incarcerated women's participation in college-level educational programs. Those who received visits were 65 percent more likely to enroll in educational programming compared to those who did not. For some women, maintaining relationships with their children serves as the primary motivation for participating in educational programs while incarcerated (Spark & Harris, 2005)

The impact of children and marriage typically differs between women and men. Studies have shown that men often experience marriage and fatherhood premiums, gaining both monetary and social benefits from these life transitions (Lincoln, 2008). In contrast, women often face marriage and motherhood deficits, where they do not enjoy the same advantages and may even encounter additional challenges (Neff, 1990). The "good marriage effect," developed by Laub, Nagin, and Sampson (1998), is grounded in elements of Social Control Theory and proposed the idea that marriage can significantly contribute to desistance from crime. However, it is strongly associated with men's desistance from crime. Its impact on women is influenced by their structural position and socialization, making the effect less straightforward for women compared to men. Zoutewelle-Terovan et al. (2014), found that neither marriage nor motherhood had a significant effect on women's desistance from crime.

Education in prison has long been supported due to its potential prosocial benefits, including its role in reducing recidivism. However, both researchers and policymakers have often

overlooked the gendered pathways to desistance. Giordano et al. (2002) found that while marriage and parenthood were significant predictors of desistance for men, they were not for women. Instead, women's self-perception and social capital played a crucial role in their journey toward desistance. Unlike men, women needed to construct an identity and envision a future self that was incompatible with crime (King, 2013). Education provided a means for women to shape these narratives, as it fostered social support among peers, allowed instructors to treat them as "students" or "real human beings" rather than "criminals," and instilled confidence in their abilities and future prospects (Brown & Bloom, 2018). Research also suggests that education has a more significant impact on women's desistance compared to men's (Rodermond et al., 2016). Brewster & Sharp (2002), in their analysis of Oklahoma Department of Corrections, found that GED completion extended the time between release and recidivism, particularly for women.

Additionally, women's pathways into crime differ from men's. Women's offenses are often crimes of survival. As Owen explains, women's motivations to commit crime "includes emotional and psychological survival mechanisms as well as economic survival in a society that physically and emotionally brutalizes women and girls and denies them competitive economic opportunities" (1998, pp. 15-16). Women in prison tend to be incarcerated for less serious offenses than men and often come from far more disordered backgrounds, which significantly influences their likelihood of future criminality (Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009; McClellan et al., 1997). If women receive education while incarcerated, it can reduce their likelihood of committing crimes out of survival upon release by expanding their economic opportunities. With increased access to education, they are better equipped to secure stable employment, reducing the financial strain that often leads to criminal activity.

The collateral consequences of incarceration are not gender neutral. Given that women are more likely to have custody of their children, the consequences of incarceration such as barriers to social welfare, financial aid, public housing, and potential loss of parental rights, may disproportionately affect women (Wood & Grasmick, 1999; Loper et al., 2009; Poehlmann, 2009; Powell & Nolan, 2003). Social capital is what is needed to acquire employment after incarceration. Female prisoners, more so than male prisoners, lack social capital (Sokoloff & Schenck-Fontaine, 2017). Therefore, employment opportunities may be even more limited for women as they face compounded challenges. Enrollment in educational programs can help alleviate these challenges, especially for women who face greater deficits in skills and social capital. Although women are in greater need for such programming, more attention is given to programming in male institutions. As Rose (2004) states, “These women who are in need of human capital typically leave the same way they arrived: unskilled and poor” (p. 86). Some suggest that women are less capable of completing these educational programs and therefore are a “waste of money” (Belknap, 2001). Others use the excuse of “low budgets” that cannot support programs for women's prisons (Austin & Irwin, 2001). Investing in women’s education is crucial because women consistently do more with less. They enter prison with less, experience incarceration with fewer programs and funding, yet still outperform men in nearly every measure of success. Providing educational opportunities for incarcerated mothers not only benefits them but also creates generational ripple effects, helping to break cycles of incarceration and foster long-term family stability.

V. The Current Study

Several studies have examined general participation in prison activities (Kaiser et al., 2024; Brosens et al., 2016; Dhami et al., 2007; Kim & Clark, 2013; Greenberg et al., 2007;

Digennaro, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2002), men's participation in prison education (Davis et al., 2013; Denney & Tynes, 2021; Courtney, 2019; Kallman, 2019), and participation in specific prison programs (Ellis, 2023; Camp et al., 2006; Littman & Sliva, 2020). However, research specifically focused on women's participation in prison education remains limited.

Rose (2004) and Spark & Harris (2005) were among the first to examine gendered prison education, but neither empirically tested the relationship between gender and educational participation. One of the few studies to do so, Rose & Rose (2014), analyzed gender differences in postsecondary prison education and found that while sex alone was not a significant predictor of participation, it was significant when combined with other factors. Key predictors for both men and women included prior education, pre-incarceration income, child visitation, time served, race/ethnicity, and participation in parenting or life skills programs. Crittenden & Koons-Witt (2017) expanded this discussion by examining overall prison program participation and availability in state prisons for women, with educational programming as one component. They found that, on average, women were more likely than men to participate in nearly every program offered, including education.

Both Rose & Rose (2014) and Crittenden & Koons-Witt (2017) provide a strong foundation for this study by examining gender differences in prison education participation and identifying key factors influencing engagement for both men and women. Their research highlights the complexity of gendered participation in prison education, suggesting that multiple intersecting factors contribute to these differences. However, their studies focus solely on postsecondary education, state prisons, and participation.

This study builds on their work by broadening the focus beyond postsecondary education, including both federal and state prisons, analyzing a larger dataset, identifying gender-specific factors, and considering non-participants to provide a more comprehensive view. Additionally, it applies a framework that integrates both deprivation and importation factors to better understand gendered patterns of participation. This study revisits and tests earlier claims of higher female participation in prison education by analyzing more recent data to examine whether the pattern persists. Finally, this study extends the analysis beyond participation by examining educational completion, assessing how gender interacts with various social and institutional factors to shape both engagement and success in prison education programs.

This study examines two key factors: whether women are more likely to participate in educational programs in prison, and whether they are more likely to successfully complete these courses. Additionally, it investigates the factors influencing participation for both men and women and whether these factors operate differently based on sex. Grounded in the literature of deprivation and importation theories, which have been used to explain patterns of prison participation, this study builds on prior research demonstrating the factors that increase engagement in educational programs. Given existing findings on gendered participation in prison activities and broader societal trends in education, I anticipate that, despite institutional barriers and differing carceral environments, incarcerated women will exhibit higher participation compared to men.

H1: Incarcerated women are more likely than incarcerated men to participate in educational programs.

Similarly, I expect that the educational trends observed outside of prison, where women increasingly outperform men, will also be reflected within the prison system.

H2: Incarcerated women are more likely than incarcerated men to complete educational programs.

If incarcerated women participate and complete in educational programs at higher rates than men, this will indicate that pre-incarceration educational patterns, where women are more likely to engage and excel in education, are imported into the prison system. This suggests that gendered educational behaviors and motivations observed in society are carried into the prison environment, despite the institutional constraints of incarceration. Conversely, if women participate and complete at lower rates than men this will imply that the structural and environmental conditions of prison disproportionately hinder women's educational engagement and that the phenomenon of women's achievement is not imported into prison. This could suggest that women face greater institutional barriers, such as limited program availability or gendered prison policies which may prevent them from accessing or completing educational opportunities at the same rate as men.

Data

For this study, I am utilizing the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI) which is a cross-sectional dataset. This is a nation-wide survey of prisoners in the US ages 18 or older in both State and Federal Prisons. The target population for the Survey of Prison Inmates was all prisoners, male and female, in Federal and State Prisons in 2016. The Bureau of Justice Statistics conducted this survey and also conducted a 2012 Census of State and Federal Adult Correctional

Facilities which counted the number of facilities and inmates in the US. After adjusting for new facilities and facilities that had closed, the total number of facilities in the universe for the survey was 2,001 and these facilities housed 1,502,671 prisoners (1,400,363 male prisoners and 102,308 female prisoners).

The Survey of Prison Inmates implemented a two-stage sample design. The first stage was a random sample of prisons. This was stratified by the sex of inmates in the prison, whether the prison was State or Federal and states that housed over 100,000 inmates (Texas, California, and Florida). This resulted in 10 separate sampling strata. Female prisons were purposely oversampled to ensure enough females to be representative of that population. There were 350 facilities that were desired for sampling. To account for non-participation, this number was inflated for a predicted 85 percent first-stage cooperation rate. There was also a reserve sample in case rates fell below 85 percent. This resulted in the first-stage sample consisting of 465 prisons. The second stage of sampling consisted of a random sample of prisoners within the selected prisons. The target sample size within each State facility was 64 inmates and 80 for Federal prisons. There were 92 prisoners selected from each State prison and 115 from each Federal prison due to an estimated 70 percent response rate. If a prison contained both male and female inmates, the target sample size was selected from each sex category. Selection was based on simple random sampling using a roster of inmates. Ineligible inmates were removed such as those under 18 or those without a bed assignment. Since half of all Federal prisoners are charged with a drug offense, non-drug offense inmates were oversampled.

Out of the 385 facilities that were sampled, the survey collected data on 364 of them. There were 21 non-participating facilities of which 15 were considered ineligible, for housing prisoners under 18 and not having bed assignments, and 6 prisons (all State prisons) refused to participate in the study. Therefore, the first-stage response rate for Federal Prisons was 100

percent and for State prisons it was 98.1 percent with a final response rate of 98.4 percent. Out of the 37,058 prisoners that were sampled, 24,848 prisoners participated. The response rate for State prisoners was 69.3 percent and 72.8 percent for Federal prisoners resulting in a total response rate for the second-stage sampling of 70.0 percent. Due to the high response rates, I believe this data to be suitable for my analysis. The survey oversampled certain populations such as female inmates and facilities with a mental health focus. Weights are used to adjust for oversampling to preserve randomness and provide accurate estimates.

For my research questions, the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates is the most recent, most informative, and most credible survey of prison inmates to date. To understand characteristics, attitudes, and the lives of prison inmates in the current day, there is no better data set to answer these questions. The survey also asks specific questions about prison programming such as education participation and demographic characteristics which are at the core of my research question.

The SPI dataset originally included 24,848 observations. However, I restricted my analysis to individuals who provided responses to the questions informing my key variables: sex, participation, and completion, resulting in a final analytical dataset of 21,104 observations.

Measures

I. Independent and Dependent Variables

Gender is the primary independent variable in this study. Participants were asked about both their assigned sex at birth and their self-identified gender, with the latter offering four options: male, female, transgender, and other. This study explores how the prison environment and structural factors shape participation in education. Currently, prison facilities are designated

as either male or female. Transgender individuals are often housed according to their assigned sex at birth, though placement in facilities that align with their gender identity is becoming more common (Van Hout et al., 2020; Van Hout et al. 2021) . However, regardless of placement, transgender individuals experience incarceration within the broader structures and culture of either a male or female prison. For this reason, I have chosen to use sex assigned at birth as my operational variable, as it is likely to correspond with the facility in which an individual is placed. This configuration is admittedly flawed, but given the constraints of the survey, it remains the best available option to test my hypotheses. The sample consists of approximately twenty-five percent women and seventy-five percent men. There were 29 transgender people and 20 people who did not identify with the options provided with both categories combined making up less than one percent of the total sample. To avoid making assumptions about transgender individuals, misgendering them, or imposing binary frameworks that may not reflect their identities, I have excluded these cases from the analytic sample.

The survey asked participants whether they “had participated in educational programs since their admission to prison.” I created the variable “participated” as a dichotomous variable with 1 indicating participation and 0 indicating non-participation. I then use this variable as the outcome variable for Models 1, 3, and 4. Out of all the participants in the study, around 44 percent of them had participated in an educational program since they had entered prison. Among the women surveyed, 44.35 percent had participated in educational programs, while 44.5 percent of the male respondents had taken part in such programs.

The survey also requested participants to share their reasons for discontinuing their participation in educational courses. 11,048 people stated that they had participated in educational programs and out of those respondents, 2,485 stated that they were no longer

participating. Participants provided the following reasons for no longer taking educational courses: completed program with no certificate, completed program with a certificate, quit/dropped out, no longer allowed to participate, sent to another facility before completing the program, program no longer available or some other reason. To create the completion variable, I combined responses from “completed with certificate” and “completed without certificate” to capture all those who had completed their program. I coded those who had completed, regardless of certification, as a 1. The rest of the sample who did not indicate completion were then coded as a 0. This variable reflects individuals who are no longer participating in educational programs because of their completion status. However, it does not capture everyone who has ever completed an educational program. Despite these limitations, it remains the best available measure for examining completion and gaining insight into it.

Table 1: Main Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables	Percentage
Sex	
Female	26.28
Male	73.72
Participation	
Overall	44.83
Male	44.82
Female	44.84
Completion	
Overall	4.75
Male	4.42
Female	5.70

Total sample size: $n = 21,104$

Note: Sex is assigned sex at birth.

Table 1: Main Independent and Dependent Variables

I categorize my variables into two groups: deprivation variables and importation variables. Following prior studies on deprivation and importation theories, I aim to include similar variables.

Importation variables capture aspects of an individual's background before incarceration, as these characteristics and experiences shape both their pre-prison and in-prison lives, including their engagement in education. Variables such as race, socioeconomic status, prior education, offense type, marital status, parental status, age, and employment history before incarceration reflect these pre-existing influences. Minority groups, in particular, may face unique barriers to education due to the lasting effects of white supremacist ideologies embedded in educational systems. Critical Race Theory argues that Western education has historically excluded and

marginalized students who do not fit the colonial “ideal” (Ekpe & Roach, 2023). As a result, individuals from racial minority backgrounds, lower socioeconomic statuses, or other marginalized identities often encounter systemic disadvantages within educational institutions that were not designed for their success (Ekpe & Roach, 2023).

Deprivation variables, on the other hand, capture respondents’ experiences within prison and aspects of prison life that may influence their participation or completion of education. Factors such as work assignments, the number of disciplinary write-ups, child contact, and time served are included as measures of deprivation. A detailed discussion of these variables is provided below.

II. Importation Variables

I included a range of demographic characteristics that are important to the concept of importation. By considering these factors, the study acknowledges the ways in which personal histories and identities shape interactions with prison life, including educational participation and completion.

Race/ethnicity variables included White (Non-Hispanic), Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and “other.” Forty-nine percent of the respondents in the sample were White (Non-Hispanic), with a higher percentage of the female population being White (69 percent) compared to the male population, where only 42 percent are White. Thirty-seven percent of the total population were Black, making it practically tied for largest racial category among men at 42 percent, while it was the second largest for women at 23 percent. Twenty-one percent of the total population identified as Hispanic, with more men identifying as Hispanic (23 percent), than women (15 percent). American Indian/Alaska Native individuals made up 12 percent of the overall population, with a slightly

higher representation among women at 14 percent, compared to 11 percent among men. Both Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander categories were around 2 percent. These latter racial categories were of similar proportions for both men and women. Although the female prison population included a disproportionately high number of minorities, its racial composition was more reflective of the overall U.S. population than that of the male prison population. The “Other” race category comprised 10 percent of the total population, with 11 percent of men and 8 percent of women identifying as such.

Table 2: Weighted Proportions/Averages of Importation Variables

Variables	Percentage		
	Overall	Male	Female
Race			
White	49.49	42.47	69.18
Black	37.04	41.74	23.84
Hispanic/Latino	20.67	22.82	14.66
Asian	1.80	1.90	1.53
American Indian/Alaskan Native	11.96	11.13	14.26
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1.52	1.53	1.48
Other Race	10.19	11.17	7.45
Age			
18-24	9.64	9.99	8.65
25-34	32.29	31.03	35.83
35-44	28.35	27.96	29.44
45-54	18.96	19.13	18.50
55-64	8.34	9.05	6.36
65+	2.41	2.84	1.21
Previous Education			
Less than High School	9.00	9.49	7.65
High School	67.50	70.51	59.05
College	21.41	18.23	30.31
Grad School	2.09	1.77	2.09
Offense Type			
Violent Offense	43.91	48.47	31.10
Property Offense	17.12	13.57	27.10
Drug Offense	22.23	19.99	28.51
Public Order Offense	16.23	17.54	12.57
Other Offense	0.51	0.43	0.72
Low SES	47.14	47.29	46.72
Job Prior	59.41	62.91	49.59
Substance Abuse Treatment	47.47	44.94	54.58
PTSD	17.50	11.31	24.87
Age at First Arrest	20.43	19.27	23.71
	(9.68)	(9.06)	(10.57)
Number of Incarcerations	4.20	4.42	3.56
	(7.96)	(7.89)	(8.13)

Total sample size: n = 21,104

Table 2: Weighted Proportions/Averages of Importation Variables

The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 86 with the mean age being 39 with a standard deviation of 12 years. The mean age was similar for both men and women with men being slightly older on average. I consider the inclusion of age important, as past studies relating to predictors of prison education have found age to be significant (Jackson & Innes, 2000). Younger inmates (i.e. lower than the median age) tended to be more open to the idea of rehabilitation, participated in drug treatment programs more often and had lower levels of prisonization, defined as the endorsing of prison culture values (Jackson & Innes, 2000). To more effectively explore how age influences outcomes at different life stages, I divided my data into age buckets (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+). This approach helps to identify age-specific differences and gives a clearer picture of how outcomes might vary throughout the life course, rather than assuming a uniform relationship

Pre-prison educational experiences can shape an individual's willingness or ability to engage in educational programs while incarcerated. Those with more education may be ineligible for certain offerings or may be less inclined to enroll in courses that fall below their skill level. Conversely, individuals with limited or no prior education might view incarceration as a chance to pursue learning opportunities, potentially leading to higher rates of participation. I coded levels of previous education as less than high school, high school/GED, college, and grad school. Approximately seventy-six percent of respondents reported attending high school or less and around 22 percent reported attending some form of higher education. Female inmates tended to have higher educational attainment than their male counterparts. Only 18 percent of men reported attending college compared with 30 percent of women. Similarly, 2.09 percent of women had attended graduate school while only 1.77 percent of men had.

Offense type can reflect the behaviors that led to an individual's incarceration, and these behaviors may continue to influence their participation or completion of educational programs. Those with serious offenses may not pursue education during their incarceration, as their long sentences and distorted goals reflect a diminished stake in traditional society, a concept central to Social Control Theory. According to this theory, when individuals lack strong ties to societal institutions like family, education, and employment, they are less motivated to engage in prosocial behaviors, such as furthering their education (Hirschi, 1998). I account for offense type in the model, categorizing it into violent, property, drug, public order, and other offenses. Around 44 percent of respondents were incarcerated for violent offenses, 22 percent for drug offenses, 17 percent for property offenses, 16 percent for public order offenses, and less than one percent were categorized as other offenses. In examining the differences in offense types between men and women, there are clear distinctions in criminal behavior. Men are more frequently involved in violent offenses, while women tend to commit different types of crimes. Out of men, 48 percent had committed a violent offense compared with only 31 percent of women. However, 29 percent of women committed drug offenses, and another 27 percent committed property offenses while only 20 percent of men were involved in drug-related crimes, and just 14 percent committed property offenses. This contrast highlights the tendency for women to be more involved in non-violent offenses compared to men, who are overrepresented in violent crimes. A violent offense does not always reflect the severity of the crime. A violent offense can encompass a broad spectrum of actions, not all of which are indicative of serious criminal behavior, such as an involvement in a one-off physical altercation. For these reasons, I proceed with caution when dealing with an offense type variable.

Socioeconomic background is also a critical factor within the importation framework. Individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be more inclined to take advantage of educational opportunities they previously lacked as a way to improve their circumstances. To construct the socio-economic status variable, I integrated responses from various survey questions. If a person responded yes to being homeless, on welfare, or in public housing before the age of 18, I consider them to be of low socioeconomic status. Out of all the respondents, 47 percent fell into the low socioeconomic status category, with an almost equal percentage of both women and men falling into this group. This indicates that low socioeconomic status affects both genders equally within the sample.

Related to socioeconomic status is whether a respondent had a job prior to entering prison. Men were more likely to have had prior employment, with 63 percent of men reporting having had a job before incarceration, compared to only 50 percent of women. This difference supports the argument that women enter prison at a greater disadvantage than men, as they are more likely to be unskilled and have less social capital (Sokoloff & Schenck-Fontaine, 2017). This disparity in employment history reflects broader socioeconomic inequalities, which may influence women's experiences in prison, including their academic pursuits.

Research on the differences in the pains of imprisonment for men and women consistently highlights the depth, severity, and consistency of trauma in the lives of incarcerated women (Chesney Lind & Shelden, 2013; Crewe et al., 2017; Owen 1998). This became a key distinguishing factor between the experiences of men and women in prison. To address this difference, I attempt to capture a measure of past trauma. Although the SPI does not directly ask about participants' history of trauma, it does inquire whether respondents have ever been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). While it's important to note that men are

generally less likely to seek mental health treatment (Anderson, 2003) and that this variable only captures those who have been diagnosed by a mental health professional, the numbers are still striking. Twenty-five percent of the total female sample reported that they had been diagnosed with PTSD while only 11 percent of men had reported they had been diagnosed. Given the pervasive nature of trauma and its disproportionate impact on incarcerated women, I believe it is crucial to include this variable in my analysis to better understand the unique challenges faced by women in prison, especially as they relate to educational outcomes.

History of substance abuse plays a significant role in shaping the lives of incarcerated individuals. Research has highlighted that a significant majority of incarcerated women with substance abuse issues, between 77% and 90%, report histories of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse (Mejía et al., 2015). This trauma is closely linked to behavioral challenges in adolescence and increases the risk of later substance abuse, delinquency, and involvement in the criminal justice system (Proctor, 2012; Crewe, et al., 2017; Mejía et al., 2015; Owen 1998). To measure history of substance abuse, I use a dichotomous variable based on the survey question, “Have you ever received substance abuse treatment?” Consistent with existing literature, women in the study reported high rates of treatment for a substance use disorder. Specifically, 55 percent of women indicated they had undergone treatment, while 45 percent of men reported the same.

Importation theory also requires an understanding of how system-involved individuals have been throughout their lives, including their prior interactions with the criminal justice system. To assess this, I use two key measures: the individual's age at first arrest and the total number of incarcerations they have experienced. The age at first arrest provides insight into when an individual first encountered the justice system, which may influence their subsequent behavior and perspectives. Meanwhile, the number of incarcerations serves as a measure of an

individual's ongoing involvement in the system, which could affect their attitudes toward rehabilitation and participation in prison programs. On average, men reported being younger at the time of their first arrest, with initial arrests occurring around age 19, compared to women whose first arrests typically occurred later, around age 24. Additionally, men reported a higher number of prior incarcerations, averaging approximately five, whereas women reported about four. These findings suggest that men in the sample tend to enter the criminal justice system earlier and cycle through it more frequently than women.

III. Deprivation Variables

Time served is a vital control variable as people who are only in prison for a short amount of time may not be interested in or be eligible to take an educational course. Relatedly, people who have been incarcerated for an exceptionally long time may not be inclined to obtain a degree since it may not be as useful to them outside of prison. These inmates might also be ineligible under the Department of Corrections standards if they have a life sentence (Tahamont et al., 2020). Similar to my approach with age, I used a categorical measure of time served to better examine how it influences outcomes at different stages. The groups include less than two years, 2-5 years, 5-10 years and 10+ years. On average, women served shorter sentences than men. Fifty-seven percent of women had served two years or less, compared to only 33 percent of men. Conversely, men were more likely to have served longer sentences, with 19 percent reporting having served ten or more years, compared to just 8 percent of women. This distribution of time served offers a more nuanced lens through which to analyze participation in prison education, revealing potential variations in engagement based on sentence length. By examining these categories separately, I can better understand how the length of an individual's incarceration influences their educational outcomes.

Table 3: Weighted Proportions/Averages of Deprivation Variables

Variables	Percentage/Mean		
	Overall	Male	Female
Time Served			
2 years or less	39.28	33.06	56.73
2-5 Years	27.16	27.97	24.88
5-10 Years	17.21	19.49	10.82
10+ Years	16.35	19.48	7.57
Work Assignment	65.33	62.69	72.74
No Children	27.42	30.22	19.56
Children No Contact	29.75	29.37	30.80
Children Contact	42.84	40.41	49.64
Married	15.58	14.87	17.58
Status (Federal)	18.57	19.31	16.48
Write Ups	5.87	6.50	4.09
	(21.95)	(23.18)	(17.92)

Total sample size: $n = 21,104$

Table 3: Weighted Proportions/Averages of Deprivation Variables

Given that behavior and rule compliance are likely factors influencing participation and completion of academic programs and are ways in which prisoners adapt to their environments, it is essential to control for this variable in analyses (Cao et al., 1997). Therefore, I utilize the number of write-ups as a variable in this model. The overall sample had an average of 6 write-ups with a standard deviation of 22. Men averaged 7 write-ups (standard deviation: 23) and women averaged 4 write-ups (standard deviation: 18). The standard deviations being greater than the median indicate the right-skewed nature of the data. The mode of write-ups is zero, meaning most individuals had no write-ups while a few outliers inflated the average. However, this difference between men's and women's write-ups highlights the differing behavioral patterns between genders within the prison population.

Work assignments in prison can significantly influence life inside prison and one's ability to participate or complete educational programs while incarcerated. The women interviewed by Owen (1998) consistently identified having a work assignment as a key way to stay out of "the mix." They described prison as a dehumanizing environment where their previous identities, such as workers or mothers, were stripped away. Work assignments, however, provided a sense of purpose, helped them stay occupied, and gave them something to lose, which in turn fostered structure and focus during their incarceration. In my sample, women were more likely to have a work assignment than men, with 73 percent of women having work assignments compared to only 63 percent of men. This resulted in an overall average of 65 percent of inmates having a work assignment.

Variables regarding relationships with others and therefore, the subsequent deprivation of these relationships are considered one of the pains of imprisonment. Marriage and parenthood are two variables that affect male and females differently and their inclusion is paramount to the specification of the model. Several studies have suggested that future research should investigate the differences between incarcerated mothers and incarcerated fathers (Brosens et al., 2016; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Rose, 2004; Baranger et al., 2018). Incarcerated mothers and fathers may face distinct challenges and motivations based on their roles as parents, which could affect their engagement in prison education and their overall experiences within the system. Out of all the respondents, about 70 percent were parents. About eighty percent of female respondents were parents and just 70 percent of males were parents. For marriage, 85 percent of total respondents were not married but women were slightly more likely to be married than men, with 18 percent of female respondents being married and 15 percent of male respondents being married.

Separation from children was one of the three structural characteristics that Rose (2004) proposed as a key reason for women's declining participation in prison education programs. Therefore, it is crucial to include child visitation as a variable in this model to better understand its impact on women's participation in educational programs across all levels. I configured child contact using survey questions that asked respondents whether they had in-person visits with their children or if they had any correspondence with them through mail, phone, email, or video chat. To capture parenthood, I created dichotomous variables indicating whether an individual did not have children, had children but no contact with them, or had children and maintained contact with them. 50 percent of women had at least some contact with their children, compared to only 40 percent of men who maintained contact with their kids.

Prison status or whether an individual is incarcerated in a federal or state facility, has been shown to influence educational participation. Rose & Rose (2014) found that federal inmates were 38 percent more likely to engage in postsecondary prison education than those in a state facility. This distinction is a vital deprivation variable in my analysis, as it provides insight into the institutional environment. Research has consistently shown that federal prisons tend to be less overcrowded, receive more funding, house inmates with longer sentences, and offer more educational programs than state prisons (Ball, 2014; Wildeman et al., 2018; Maruschak & Buehler, 2021). According to the 2005 Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities, 98 percent of federal institutions provided college courses, whereas fewer than 35 percent of state prisons did (Stephan, 2008). Some states, such as Pennsylvania and South Carolina, reported that no college courses were offered in their facilities. These disparities highlight how facility type shapes an inmate's environment, level of deprivation, access to programming, and ultimately, their likelihood of educational participation.

Controlling for these factors provides us with a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics that influence educational participation and completion within the prison system. By accounting for these variables, I can better isolate the specific barriers and motivations that affect educational engagement. Together, these variables help provide a comprehensive understanding of how both pre-incarceration experiences and the conditions of prison life affect educational outcomes, drawing on the frameworks of importation and deprivation theories.

Analytical Strategy

For this project, I find that a Linear Probability Model (LPM) is the most suitable approach, as the outcome variable is dichotomous. I define the first model to include participation as the outcome variable and sex as the main explanatory variable. I control for race, ethnicity, age, prior job, sentence length, marital status, parenthood, socioeconomic status, PTSD, previous education, work assignment, prison status, and write-ups. I combine both my deprivation and importation variables because the consensus in the theoretical literature suggests that neither theory operates in isolation (Dobbs and Courtney, 2005; Brosens et al., 2016; Dhami et al., 2007). Instead, both theories interact and influence outcomes simultaneously.

It is essential to examine not only who is more likely to participate in educational programs but also who is completing them at higher rates. While much of the existing research focuses on participation, there has been limited attention to other outcomes. Understanding completion is crucial in determining whether women are truly excelling in these programs. To measure completion, I create a variable by combining two existing measures: completion with a certificate and completion without a certificate. The second model analyzes completion for the entire sample, using the same covariates as the first model.

The pooled models, which include both men and women, examine the broader factors influencing educational outcomes and assess whether gender plays a significant role. However, due to the disproportionately large number of men in the dataset, these models are heavily influenced by men's experiences, potentially obscuring gender-specific variations. The experiences of women are qualitatively different and to account for these differences, I employed separate models for men and women with the same covariates to allow coefficients to vary freely across gender. Models 3 and 4 examine participation using the same covariates as Model 1, but Model 3 is restricted to males, while Model 4 is limited to females. Similarly, Models 4 and 5 analyze completion, with Model 4 focusing on males and Model 5 on females. This approach allows me to better understand how each variable might impact participation or completion differently for men and women, providing a more nuanced analysis of gendered education experiences in prison.

I employed several tests and methods to ensure the accuracy of the results. I ran logit models to confirm consistent outcomes across different methods (See *Table 10*). I applied analytic weights in the model to maintain the representativeness of the sample in relation to the population. Although the model failed the White test, indicating the presence of heteroskedasticity, I utilized robust standard errors to address and correct for this issue.

Finally, I analyzed additional survey questions to uncover the specific reasons and motivations behind the inmates' choices. Interviewers asked questions such as, "What is the main reason for not participating in educational programs?" They also asked respondents about the importance of education in areas such as making friends, breaking up boredom, or improving oneself. These questions aim to shed light on personal motivations, a topic that researchers have largely overlooked but have highlighted as an area for future research. Investigating these

responses can provide context for the empirical findings and offer deeper insights into inmates' decisions.

A central critique of prior research on prison education is its limited attention to non-participants. While existing literature has extensively explored the factors that encourage participation, it often overlooks the equally important question of why many individuals opt out or are unable to take part. This gap is significant, as understanding the perspectives and experiences of non-participants can provide critical insights into the accessibility, relevance, and design of prison education initiatives. Barriers to participation may be structural, such as limited availability of programs or long waitlists; personal, including lack of motivation, fear of failure, or mental health challenges; or institutional, such as staff discouragement or punitive policies. Addressing these barriers requires a deeper, more nuanced analysis. To contribute to this area of inquiry, I examined specific survey questions from the dataset that offer insight into the reasons incarcerated individuals may not participate in education. These responses illuminate the challenges and perceptions that shape educational engagement, and they can inform the development of more inclusive and responsive educational opportunities behind bars.

Additionally, I examined descriptive data from survey questions that asked participants to reflect on how important they believed education was in various areas of their lives. These questions aimed to capture the perceived value of education to help get a job upon release, to get an education, and to avoid trouble while incarcerated. By analyzing these responses, I sought to better understand what participants hoped to gain from their educational experiences and how strongly they believed education could impact their futures, both during incarceration and upon reentry into society.

Results

To test the hypothesis that women will be more likely to participate in academics while in prison, Model 1 includes participation as the outcome variable and sex as the main explanatory variable. Holding all else constant, being female was associated with a 6 to 10 percentage point increase in the probability of participating in educational programs in prison ($p < 0.01$).

Table 4: Regression Results Models 1 and 2

Variables	Model 1: Participation n = 21,104		Model 2: Completion n = 21,104	
	β	SE	β	SE
Importation Variables				
Female	0.077***	(0.011)	0.018***	(0.005)
Race				
Black	0.045***	(0.009)	0.007	(0.004)
Hispanic/Latino	0.022*	(0.011)	−0.006	(0.005)
Asian	0.067*	(0.030)	0.008	(0.015)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	−0.001	(0.012)	0.001	(0.005)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.087**	(0.031)	−0.006	(0.014)
Other Race	0.034**	(0.013)	−0.006	(0.005)
Age				
25-34	−0.067***	(0.015)	−0.009	(0.007)
35-44	−0.126***	(0.016)	−0.020*	(0.007)
45-54	−0.161***	(0.018)	−0.022**	(0.007)
55-64	−0.195***	(0.021)	−0.025**	(0.009)
65+	−0.193***	(0.032)	−0.026*	(0.013)
Previous Education				
High School	−0.037**	(0.014)	0.008	(0.005)
College	−0.168***	(0.016)	−0.002	(0.006)
Grad School	−0.156***	(0.030)	−0.007	(0.010)
Offense Type				
Property Offense	−0.191	(0.012)	−0.004	(0.005)
Drug Offense	−0.011	(0.013)	0.003	(0.006)
Public Order Offense	−0.031**	(0.012)	−0.003	(0.005)
Other Offense	−0.017	(0.067)	−0.011	(0.015)
Low SES	0.051***	(0.008)	−0.001	(0.004)
Job Prior	−0.004	(0.008)	0.001	(0.004)
Substance Abuse Treatment	0.016	(0.008)	0.010*	(0.004)
PTSD	0.008	(0.012)	−0.005	(0.005)
Age at First Arrest	0.001	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)
Number of Incarcerations	−0.001	(0.001)	−0.001	(0.001)
Deprivation Variables				
Time Served				
2-5 Years	0.156***	(0.010)	0.021***	(0.005)
5-10 Years	0.273***	(0.012)	0.015**	(0.005)
10+ Years	0.417***	(0.014)	0.017**	(0.006)
Work Assignment	0.025**	(0.009)	0.014***	(0.003)
Child No Contact	−0.011	(0.011)	−0.003	(0.005)
Child Contact	0.021*	(0.010)	0.001	(0.004)
Married	0.029*	(0.011)	0.011**	(0.005)
Status	0.127***	(0.012)	0.026***	(0.006)
Write ups	0.001	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)
R-squared	0.134		0.009	

$p < 0.001$ ***, $p < 0.01$ **, $p < 0.05$ *

Table 4: Regression Results Models 1 and 2

All of the racial categories were found to be significant except American Indian/Alaska Native. Holding all other factors constant, Black individuals were 3 to 6 percentage points and Hispanic/Latinos were 0.1 to 4 percentage points more likely to participate in educational programs compared to White individuals. Additionally, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders were 3 to 15 percentage points more likely, and those categorized as “Other Race” were 1 to 6 percentage points more likely to participate in educational programs than White inmates. Overall, these results suggest that White individuals had the lowest likelihood of participating in educational programs compared to other racial groups.

Age was a highly significant predictor of participation in prison education. When compared to individuals in the 18-24 bracket, and holding all else constant, those aged 25-34 were associated with a 4 to 10 percentage point decrease. With each age category, the likelihood of participation decreased with finally, the 65 plus category being associated with a 13 to 26 percentage point decrease in the likelihood of participating in prison education programs. These findings suggest that as an individual ages, the less likely they are to engage in education programs.

The level of education prior to entering prison significantly influenced the likelihood of participation in prison education. Only having a high school education prior to entering prison was associated with a 1 to 6 percentage point decrease in the likelihood of participating in education courses when compared to those with less than a high school degree. This made individuals with less than a high school education the most likely to participate. Holding all else constant, having a college education was associated with a 14 to 20 percentage point decrease and having attended grad school was associated with a 10 to 22 percentage point decrease in the probability of participating in educational programs in prison compared to people with only an

elementary education. These findings were all found to be significant by at least the 1 percent level. Altogether, it seems that the more education one previously had, the less likely they were to take courses in prison.

Offense type was also significantly associated with the likelihood of participation in prison education. Property, drug, public order, and “other” offenses were all associated with a decrease in the likelihood of participation when compared to violent offenses. Overall, these findings indicate that individuals convicted of violent offenses were more likely to engage in prison education compared to those convicted of drug, property, or public order offenses.

Time served was positively associated with the likelihood of participation in an education program. Those who had served longer had greater probabilities of engaging in prison education, compared to the reference group (less than two years). Those who had served 2-5 years were 14 to 18 percentage points more likely to participate, those who served 5-10 years were 25 to 30 percentage points more likely, and finally, those serving more than 10 years were 39 to 44 percentage points more likely to participate than those who served less than two years. These findings suggest a positive relationship between sentence length and educational participation.

Individuals with low socioeconomic status were 3 to 7 percentage points more likely to enroll. Those assigned to work while incarcerated had a 1 to 4 percentage point higher likelihood of participation. Finally, being housed in a federal prison was associated with a 10 to 15 percentage point increase in the probability of participating in educational programs.

In Model 2, which predicts program completion, being a female inmate was associated with a 1 to 3 percentage point increase in the likelihood of course completion, holding all else constant. Race was not found to be a significant predictor of completion in the second model.

Similar to the first model, age was negatively associated with course completion. Finally, prison status was a significant factor, with individuals in federal prisons being 1 to 4 percentage points more likely to complete their courses than those in state prisons.

Table 5: Regression Results Models 3 and 4

Variables	Model 3: Male Participation n = 15,558		Model 4: Female Participation n = 5,546	
	β	SE	β	SE
Importation Variables				
Race				
Black	0.047***	(0.010)	0.029	(0.021)
Hispanic/Latino	0.025*	(0.011)	-0.001	(0.027)
Asian	0.072*	(0.031)	-0.026	(0.070)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	-0.002	(0.013)	0.007	(0.023)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.10**	(0.032)	0.011	(0.071)
Other Race	0.036**	(0.014)	0.003	(0.035)
Age				
25-34	-0.072***	(0.016)	0.008	(0.035)
35-44	-0.130***	(0.017)	-0.055	(0.037)
45-54	-0.163***	(0.019)	-0.119**	(0.043)
55-64	-0.200***	(0.022)	-0.095	(0.052)
65+	-0.194***	(0.033)	-0.205*	(0.104)
Previous Education				
High School	-0.034*	(0.015)	-0.081*	(0.032)
College	-0.160***	(0.017)	-0.251***	(0.033)
Grad School	-0.142***	(0.034)	-0.294***	(0.050)
Offense Type				
Property Offense	-0.017	(0.013)	-0.033	(0.025)
Drug Offense	-0.011	(0.014)	-0.011	(0.025)
Public Order Offense	-0.032*	(0.013)	-0.016	(0.030)
Other Offense	0.003	(0.073)	-0.201**	(0.072)
Low SES	0.051***	(0.009)	0.058**	(0.018)
Job Prior	-0.004	(0.009)	-0.003	(0.017)
Substance Abuse Treatment	0.015	(0.009)	0.022	(0.018)
PTSD	0.009	(0.013)	-0.002	(0.018)
Age at First Arrest	0.001	(0.001)	0.002	(0.001)
Number of Incarcerations	-0.001	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)
Deprivation Variables				
Time Served				
2-5 Years	0.154***	(0.011)	0.184***	(0.021)
5-10 Years	0.273***	(0.013)	0.280***	(0.031)
10+ Years	0.416***	(0.015)	0.433***	(0.036)
Work Assignment	0.026**	(0.009)	0.013	(0.019)
Child No Contact	-0.011	(0.012)	-0.006	(0.026)
Child Contact	0.216*	(0.011)	0.007	(0.023)
Married	0.029*	(0.011)	0.034	(0.023)
Status	0.126***	(0.013)	0.149***	(0.024)
Write ups	0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)
R-squared	0.135		0.140	

$p < 0.001$ ***, $p < 0.01$ **, $p < 0.05$ *

Table 5: Regression Results Models 3 and 4

Models 3 and 4 are gender specific models that mimic Model 1. Model 3 examined participation in prison education among men. The results largely mirrored those of the first model, with minor differences in magnitude and significance levels. White inmates were the least likely to participate in educational programs, while those with less than a high school education had the highest likelihood of enrolling. Male inmates with violent offenses, lower socioeconomic status, work assignments, and placement in federal facilities were more likely to participate. Additionally, as males aged, their likelihood of participation decreased, whereas more time served was associated with higher participation rates.

Model 4, which replicated Model 3 using only the female dataset, yielded similar results regarding educational participation. Female inmates who were older, served more time, were of low socioeconomic status, and those who were housed in federal facilities were more likely to participate in educational programs. These findings suggest that while some of the same factors influence participation across genders, certain variables, such as race, may play a more prominent role in shaping educational engagement among men than among women.

Table 6: Regression Results Models 5 and 6

Variables	Model 5: Male Completion n = 15,558		Model 6: Female Completion n = 5,546	
	β	SE	β	SE
Importation Variables				
Race				
Black	0.008*	(0.004)	-0.011	(0.009)
Hispanic/Latino	-0.005	(0.005)	-0.008	(0.013)
Asian	0.011	(0.016)	0.045**	(0.017)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	-0.001	(0.005)	0.009	(0.013)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	-0.006	(0.015)	-0.002*	(0.029)
Other Race	-0.008	(0.006)	0.036	(0.021)
Age				
25-34	-0.011	(0.008)	0.012	(0.016)
35-44	-0.021**	(0.008)	-0.011	(0.016)
45-54	-0.023**	(0.008)	-0.010	(0.019)
55-64	-0.025**	(0.009)	-0.013	(0.028)
65+	-0.027*	(0.013)	-0.001	(0.038)
Previous Education				
High School	0.007	(0.006)	0.020	(0.014)
College	-0.002	(0.007)	0.006	(0.015)
Grad School	0.007	(0.011)	0.001	(0.023)
Offense Type				
Property Offense	-0.003	(0.005)	-0.012	(0.011)
Drug Offense	0.004	(0.006)	-0.004	(0.012)
Public Order Offense	-0.003	(0.005)	-0.005	(0.017)
Other Offense	-0.009	(0.016)	-0.030	(0.024)
Low SES	-0.001	(0.004)	-0.001	(0.009)
Job Prior	0.001	(0.004)	-0.009	(0.008)
Substance Abuse Treatment	0.015	(0.009)	0.014	(0.009)
PTSD	-0.005	(0.005)	-0.003	(0.009)
Age at First Arrest	-0.001	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)
Number of Incarcerations	-0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)
Deprivation Variables				
Time Served				
2-5 Years	0.020***	(0.005)	0.037**	(0.013)
5-10 Years	0.015**	(0.006)	0.002	(0.012)
10 +Years	0.016**	(0.006)	0.033	(0.021)
Work Assignment	0.001	(0.004)	0.019*	(0.009)
Child No Contact	-0.002	(0.005)	-0.021	(0.013)
Child Contact	-0.001	(0.005)	-0.001	(0.012)
Married	0.012*	(0.005)	0.022	(0.012)
Status	0.026***	(0.006)	0.031*	(0.013)
Write ups	0.001	(0.009)	-0.001	(0.001)
R-squared	0.009		0.020	

$p < 0.001^{***}$, $p < 0.01^{**}$, $p < 0.05^{*}$

Table 6: Regression Results Models 5 and 6

Models 5 and 6 examined course completion separately for male and female inmates. Age was a significant factor for males, with older men being less likely to complete their courses, but it was not a significant predictor for females. Across both genders, individuals with less than a high school education were the most likely to complete their courses. Having a work assignment also positively influenced completion. Additionally, time served was significantly and positively associated with completion for both male and female inmates. Facility type played a key role as well with females and males in federal facilities having a higher likelihood of completion compared to those in state prisons. These findings underscore the diverse impacts of demographic and institutional factors on educational completion among incarcerated individuals.

Much of the existing literature has examined factors influencing participation, but relatively little attention has been given to those who choose not to engage in educational programs. Understanding the barriers faced by non-participants, whether structural, personal, or institutional, is crucial for developing more inclusive and effective educational opportunities within prisons. Among those who did not participate in educational programs, the most commonly cited reason was “other reason” (30%), followed by a perceived lack of need or interest in the program (24%). This observation connects to the findings concerning previous education, highlighting that prisons predominantly offer GED programs (Harlow, 2003). The next most common responses for non-participation were that individuals did not receive an offer to participate or were not qualified or allowed to attend. While men and women gave generally similar reasons, women more frequently cited being “not qualified/allowed” and “could not get in.” This discrepancy may suggest that women’s prisons offer fewer educational opportunities overall and particularly at the higher education level. Given that women in the sample were more

likely to have attained higher levels of education prior to incarceration, the limited availability of advanced coursework may disproportionately affect their ability to participate.

Table 7: Weighted Proportions of Non-Participant Responses

Variables	Percentage		
	Overall	Male	Female
Main Reason for Not Participating			
Doesn't Know About Program	2.59	2.80	1.99
Doesn't Need Program/Not Interested	24.48	25.61	21.31
Hasn't Been Offered the Chance	16.88	16.94	16.74
Has Heard Bad Things About Program	0.13	0.15	0.07
Staff Didn't Want Them to Attend	0.45	0.51	0.26
Too Busy	2.71	2.66	2.84
Not Qualified/Allowed	10.37	9.70	12.23
Could Not Get In	7.91	7.35	9.48
No Specific Reason	4.00	4.22	3.40
Other Reason	30.43	30.01	31.62

Total sample size: $n = 11,644$

Table 7: Weighted Proportions of Non-Participant Responses

Rose (2004) emphasized the importance of distinguishing between two types of motivational characteristics: those that primarily drive participation in educational programs and those that encourage not only participation but also successful completion of these programs. Although being bored might motivate an individual to participate, it is unlikely that this motivation significantly contributes to their likelihood of successfully completing the course. In the SPI, respondents who had participated in educational courses were asked how important education was to a series of specific areas including, breaking up boredom, spending time with friends, getting out of prison early, and improving themselves. What men and women valued most showed several similarities. Ninety-four percent of women and 91 percent of men said that participating in educational programs was very important to improving themselves. Seventy-five

percent of women, along with 66 percent of men, said that spending time with or making friends was not an important factor in the decision to enroll. Although women were more likely to have found improving oneself more important than men and found aspects such as making friends and relieving boredom as less important than men, overall these findings suggest that all participants are engaging in educational courses for productive reasons, sharing common views on how education impacts their personal growth and future opportunities.

Table 8: Weighted Proportions of Participant Responses

Variables	Percentage		
	Overall	Male	Female
How important is participating in education programs to:			
Break Up Boredom			
Very Important	35.95	37.03	32.93
Sort of Important	24.70	24.49	25.29
Not Important at All	38.93	38.02	41.50
Make Friends			
Very Important	12.62	13.72	9.53
Sort of Important	18.81	19.88	15.80
Not Important at All	68.34	66.11	74.59
Get an Early Release			
Very Important	52.74	55.37	45.36
Sort of Important	15.66	15.45	16.24
Not Important at All	31.28	28.83	38.16
Improve Yourself			
Very Important	92.17	91.37	94.41
Sort of Important	5.33	5.84	3.90
Not Important at All	2.35	2.58	1.69

Total sample size: n = 9,460

Table 8: Weighted Proportions of Participant Responses

Participants were also asked how much they believed participating in educational programs would help them in three specific areas: attaining a better education, securing a job upon release, and avoiding future trouble. Response options included “a lot,” “some,” and “not at all.” On average, men rated the helpfulness of education across these outcomes lower than women did. For example, 84 percent of women reported that educational programming would

help them *a lot* in getting a job after release, compared to 78 percent of men. This difference may reflect women’s greater optimism about the role of education in their reintegration process. It could also suggest that women perceive educational attainment as a more viable or necessary pathway to post-release success.

Table 9: Weighted Proportions of Participant Responses

Variables	Percentage		
	Overall	Male	Female
How much does participating in education programs help you:			
Get a Better Education			
A Lot	85.58	84.55	88.46
Some	10.47	11.36	7.96
Not at All	3.78	3.87	3.54
Get a Job			
A Lot	79.83	78.37	83.92
Some	12.80	13.74	10.17
Not at All	7.12	7.62	5.75
Avoid Trouble			
A Lot	73.49	72.77	75.51
Some	12.44	12.75	11.58
Not at All	13.81	14.21	12.67

Total sample size: n = 9,460

Table 9: Weighted Proportions of Participant Responses

Discussion

This study examines gender differences in educational participation and completion among incarcerated individuals using the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates. The research stems from a greater need for insight into the lived experiences of women. While women excelling in education outside prison has been well-documented, little research has explored whether this

success translates into the carceral setting. The central question is whether this phenomenon is carried into prison or if the deprivations of prison limit women's success.

Results from Model 1 show that being a female inmate is associated with a 6 to 10 percentage point higher likelihood of participating in educational programs than male inmates. Similarly, Model 2 finds that being a female inmate is associated with a 1 to 3 percentage point increase in the likelihood of course completion. These findings suggest that gender is a significant predictor of both participation and completion in prison education, supporting the idea that this pattern is imported from the outside world.

By splitting the dataset by gender, Models 3 through 6 focused on more homogeneous groups, allowing for a clearer examination of gender-specific variations. Age emerged as a factor influencing both participation and completion in educational programs. However, once the models were disaggregated by gender, age was not found to be a significant predictor for women. For men, by contrast, the likelihood of both participation and completion declined with age. Ageism within the prison system has been well documented, with institutions often prioritizing programming and resources for younger inmates based on the assumption that older individuals have fewer employment prospects upon release (Mueller-Johnson & Dhami, 2009; Wahidin, 2006). This institutional bias may contribute to lower participation rates among older prisoners, either through limited access to programs or a reduced perception of the benefits of engaging in them.

Additionally, race had a notable impact on participation and completion in the male population. White males were the least likely to engage in educational programs, with Black

males being the most likely and the other racial groups falling somewhere in between. In contrast, race was not a significant predictor for females.

Several factors were significant across all models. One consistent result was that individuals with higher levels of prior education were less likely to participate in prison education. This is likely because most prisons primarily offer GED programs rather than higher education, which may not meet the needs or aspirations of individuals who already possess a college degree (Harlow, 2003). The Bureau of Justice Statistics' Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities reported that in 2005, 77 percent of facilities offered secondary education or GED programs, making these the most prevalent educational opportunities available (Stephan, 2008). As a result, those with less than a high school education are the most in need of these courses or are the only ones eligible for them.

Sentence length was also a relevant factor in all models. As sentence length increased, so did participation and subsequent completion of educational programs. This is likely because longer sentences provide more opportunities to enroll in and complete courses. Many prison education programs require a significant time commitment and have waitlists for admission, meaning individuals with shorter sentences may be released before they have the opportunity to participate.

Offense type was another significant factor in many of the models, suggesting that the nature of an individual's conviction may influence their motivation or institutional encouragement to participate in education. Those convicted of violent offenses may be more likely to enroll in educational programs as a form of rehabilitation or self-improvement.

Facility type significantly impacted both participation and completion for males and females. Across all models, individuals housed in federal prisons were more likely to participate in and complete educational programs. This highlights the importance of structural characteristics in shaping educational outcomes for incarcerated individuals. Previous research by Rose & Rose (2014) found that federal inmates were 38 percent more likely to engage in postsecondary prison education than those in state facilities. The greater participation rates among federal inmates may be due to federal prisons being less overcrowded, receiving more funding, and offering more educational programs than state prisons (Ball, 2014; Wildeman et al., 2018; Maruschak & Buehler, 2021). Facility type influences an inmate's environment and level of deprivation, therefore impacting their access to programming, and ultimately, their likelihood of educational engagement.

Overall, these results suggest that while structural and individual factors influence educational participation and completion across both groups, outcomes are also shaped by gender-specific experiences and challenges within the prison environment. These findings reaffirm that gender is a significant predictor of both participation and completion in prison education programs, aligning with previous research showing women participate at higher rates than men (Rose & Rose, 2014; Crittenden & Koons-Witt, 2017). This study not only confirms those findings in a contemporary context but also extends the literature by showing that women are more likely to complete these programs as well. Additionally, the study examined non-participants and found that most selected "other reason" rather than the provided options. Among those who did choose pre-written responses, the most common were "doesn't need program" and "not offered the chance to participate," highlighting the ongoing lack of adequate educational resources in prisons.

Both deprivation and importation variables play a crucial role in shaping these outcomes, but gender interacts with these factors in ways that highlight differences in how deprivations and imported experiences affect men and women. These findings echo Owen's (1998) selection argument, which suggests that educational outcomes are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the organizational context and the dynamic interactions within it. Several of the findings identified by Owen (1998) through ethnographic research, along with insights from other studies, were reflected in my descriptive data as well, including women's greater contact with their children, fewer disciplinary write-ups, more positive perceptions of education, higher levels of educational attainment prior to incarceration, and more extensive histories of substance abuse and PTSD compared to men.

Despite being disadvantaged and underserved, this study shows that women are still participating in and completing education programs at a higher rate than men. One might expect that these inequalities would dampen women's motivation to seek education while incarcerated, but they do not. So why are women excelling despite all odds? One possible explanation lies in the unique prison culture of women's prisons. Scholars have suggested that to replace the family they lost, women form "pseudo families" inside prison (Wooldredge, 2020; Wright, 2018; Bartels & Gaffney, 2011; Williams, 2017; Pollock, 2002; Owen, 1998; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965; Giallombardo, 1966; Heffernan, 1972). These "pseudo families" provide supportive and meaningful relationships in an otherwise harsh environment. Research indicates that this social support contributes positively to inmates' psychological well-being, helps manage personal stress, and aids in recovery from physical illnesses (Hart, 1995). Members of these families can motivate individuals to pursue education by boosting their self-worth or by directly urging them to participate, as they have emotional stakes in each other's well-being. Additionally, family

members may have previously taken the same educational courses, allowing them to assist individuals in navigating the curriculum, studying effectively, and offering valuable insights based on their own experiences (Rose, 2004). This dynamic is well-documented and represents a unique aspect of women's prison culture that men's prisons typically do not exhibit. Therefore, women may have access to advantages that men do not, such as the connections and relationships from "pseudo families" that motivate them to participate and support them throughout their education.

Another explanation for this unexpected achievement may be the role of motherhood in the lives of incarcerated women. Women in prison are more likely than their male counterparts to have been primary caregivers before incarceration, and many describe motherhood as the most important aspect of their identity (Loper et al. 2009; Poehlmann, 2009; Powell & Nolan 2003; Owen, 1998). Reuniting with their children often becomes a central focus, serving as an informal form of social control that encourages them to stay out of "the mix" and engage in productive activities such as education (Owen, 1998; Baranger et al., 2018). In fact, women in Spark & Harris (2005) reported that their primary motivation for enrolling in educational programs was their children. The same informal social control that motivates women to enroll in educational programs may also encourage them to persist and complete their coursework.

I. Limitations

Limitations of this study include but are not limited to, potential omitted variable bias, issues with variable configuration, limited insights on funding and organizational variations between prisons, and the lack of information on the specifics of educational programming in

prisons. This research exclusively uses the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates dataset, which does not include information on individual prison facilities, making it impossible to compare academic programs across women's and men's prisons. Additionally, the SPI collects data only on participation, completion, and motivations, without details on student grades or specific program structures.

There are measurement limitations in how course completion is captured in the dataset. The survey only asks about completion from individuals who are no longer participating, which may lead to an underrepresentation of inmates who have successfully completed a course. Specifically, the survey first asks whether participants have engaged in education since admission. If they had, they were then asked whether they were currently participating. Those who had previously participated but were no longer involved were asked to provide a reason, with response options including completion without a certificate, completion with a certificate, dropping out, being removed from the program, or program unavailability, among others.

To examine completion, I combined the two completion-related responses. However, this variable may not fully capture the actual completion rate, potentially limiting its accuracy as a measure of student success. As a result, the coefficients and findings on course completion should be interpreted with caution. Despite these limitations, I included this variable to provide insight into educational achievement in prison, an area that has been largely overlooked in previous research.

A direct examination of the data provides a clearer picture on completion. Among those who had participated in educational programs but were no longer enrolled, 50 percent of women reported completing their coursework, compared to 41 percent of men,

yielding an overall completion rate of 43 percent among respondents. The most common reason for no longer taking educational courses was program completion, followed by "some other reason" (35 percent) and program expulsion (7 percent).

Future research should consider conducting in-depth studies of select prisons to gain a more comprehensive understanding of gender disparities in prison education. Since my analysis does not allow for direct comparisons of programs across prisons, it may be beneficial to gather detailed information on program organization to examine how they differ between male and female prisons. Another potential avenue is analyzing longitudinal data on programs from a facility that houses both men and women. This would allow for a comparison of multiple measures including completion, participation, and academic performance within the same institutional context. Collecting specific data on academic outcomes, program funding, and structural differences could provide valuable insights into whether women excel in prison education and whether their programs receive equitable resources.

Conclusion

This study examines a range of factors influenced by importation and deprivation theories to predict educational participation and completion in prison, with a particular focus on the impact of inmate sex. The goal is to determine whether gender gaps in education observed outside of prison extend into the carceral setting. Findings indicate that, holding all else constant, being female was associated with a 6 to 10 percentage point increase in the likelihood of participating in educational programs compared to men. Additionally, women had an increase of 1 to 3 percentage points in the likelihood of course completion compared to men. These results suggest that, despite systemic barriers and a lack of institutional support, women continue to seek

out and succeed in educational opportunities while incarcerated. This research also finds support for the integration of both deprivation and importation variables, as both played a role in educational participation and completion. However, gender interacted with these variables in ways that shaped how they were expressed. These findings highlight the complexity of gender dynamics in prison education and suggest that future research and policy should consider how gender intersects with both structural and individual factors to shape educational outcomes.

This research bridges multiple areas of scholarship, including feminist literature, education studies, and prison education research. It expands our understanding of whether the well-documented link between femininity and educational success, as described in “doing gender” literature, persists within prison. Furthermore, this study helps identify which individuals benefit most from prison education and highlights systemic barriers that may hinder participation. Importantly, the findings should not be used to justify limiting programming based on gender. If it is believed that education is a fundamental right and a critical tool for rehabilitation for all incarcerated individuals, rather than reinforcing gendered divisions in access to educational resources, the focus should be on expanding and improving programming to ensure that all individuals, regardless of gender, have opportunities to learn, grow, and prepare for successful reintegration into society.

Despite being underserved and confined in institutions designed without them in mind, women continue to overcome these barriers and achieve academic success. Their resilience underscores how women’s excellence extends even into the most marginalized spaces of society, including prisons, places where those deemed “undesirable” and “undeserving” are placed. The uniqueness of women’s experiences within the criminal justice system must be acknowledged. Women are not simply passive recipients of incarceration, rather, they actively seek ways to do

better while doing their time demonstrating a determination and strength that should be recognized and supported through greater investment in their educational opportunities.

Supplemental Tables

Table 10: Logit Regression Results Models 7 and 8

Variables	Model 7: Participation n = 21,104		Model 8: Completion n = 21,104	
	β	SE	β	SE
Importation Variables				
Female	0.482***	(0.040)	0.374***	(0.080)
Race				
Black	0.214***	(0.034)	0.061	(0.074)
Hispanic/Latino	0.119**	(0.042)	−0.222*	(0.097)
Asian	0.263*	(0.116)	−0.097	(0.270)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.016	(0.0463)	0.064	(0.101)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.081	(0.124)	−0.273	(0.326)
Other Race	0.131*	(0.052)	−0.099	(0.123)
Age				
25-34	−0.310***	(0.055)	−0.165	(0.121)
35-44	−0.510***	(0.060)	−0.399**	(0.132)
45-54	−0.712***	(0.068)	−0.393**	(0.150)
55-64	−0.765***	(0.083)	−0.651***	(0.192)
65+	−0.863***	(0.126)	−0.764*	(0.312)
Previous Education				
High School/GED	−0.200***	(0.053)	0.202	(0.129)
College	−0.771***	(0.016)	0.072	(0.145)
Grad School	−0.622***	(0.123)	0.137	(0.260)
Offense Type				
Property Offense	−0.132**	(0.012)	−0.024	(0.104)
Drug Offense	−0.077	(0.044)	0.057	(0.095)
Public Order Offense	−0.117*	(0.049)	0.018	(0.106)
Other Offense	−0.186	(0.212)	0.277	(0.399)
Low SES	0.242***	(0.032)	−0.009	(0.071)
Job Prior	0.025	(0.032)	0.054	(0.069)
Substance Abuse Treatment	0.063*	(0.032)	0.098	(0.070)
PTSD	0.028	(0.042)	−0.170	(0.095)
Age at First Arrest	0.002	(0.002)	−0.002	(0.005)
Number of Incarcerations	−0.003	(0.002)	−0.005	(0.006)
Deprivation Variables				
Time Served				
2-5 Years	0.721***	(0.039)	0.515***	(0.085)
5-10 Years	1.250***	(0.048)	0.426***	(0.105)
10+ Years	1.805***	(0.058)	0.407**	(0.126)
Work Assignment	0.127***	(0.033)	0.344***	(0.079)
Child No Contact	−0.019	(0.044)	−0.102	(0.101)
Child Contact	0.051	(0.039)	0.003	(0.084)
Married	0.106*	(0.043)	0.298***	(0.088)
Status	0.640***	(0.044)	0.544***	(0.085)
Write ups	0.001	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)
Pseudo R-squared	0.098		0.026	

$p < 0.001^{***}, p < 0.01^{**}, p < 0.05^{*}$

Table 10: Table presents log-odds coefficients

Table 10: Logit Regression Results Models 7 and 8

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