

REHABILITATION OF FEMALE OFFENDERS: A CASE FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE
PROGRAMMING

by

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Abstract

Each year, hundreds of thousands of individuals housed in United States state prison facilities are provided access to rehabilitative programming intended to lessen the probability of offender recidivism. The existing problem surrounding said programs is the “gender-neutral” approach utilized by many jurisdictions nationwide—ignoring the unique criminogenic risks and needs of female offenders. Through an extensive review of literature, this honors thesis explores the unique factors of female criminality, the history of rehabilitative programming within the United States, and the development of gender-responsive rehabilitation programs in women’s prison facilities. Further, this thesis provides a comparative analysis of the types of rehabilitative programming available to female offenders within state women’s prison facilities in California and North Carolina utilizing data collected via state-sponsored agencies, with specific consideration to the presence or lack of gender-responsive programming within the states offender rehabilitation model. Analyzed programs are categorized by descriptive variables defined within. Utilizing data pertaining to the female offender population and presence or lack of accessible gender-responsive programming within each state, conclusions are drawn regarding the potential correlation between the two. This thesis concludes with a discussion of future policy implications, as well as limitations to the study’s generalizability. The research presented in this thesis lays the foundation for further research to be conducted regarding the accessibility and success of gender-responsive programming in women’s correctional facilities nationwide.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Each year, approximately 610,000 individuals reenter their communities upon release from state and federal prison facilities in the United States (Sawyer, 2022). An estimated 68% of these individuals, however, will find themselves reincarnated within three years of release (National Institute of Justice, 2008). This return to criminal behavior, classified as recidivism, serves as a complex issue the United States criminal justice system has previously failed to address. Throughout recent decades, the implementation of offender rehabilitation and reentry programming into correctional facilities has shown promising results pertaining to the lowering of historically high rates of recidivism. Upon receiving governmental assistance through initiatives such as the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) and Second Chance Act, many correctional institutions nationwide currently provide incarcerated individuals with rehabilitative programming of some form (National Institute of Justice, 2012; National Reentry Resource Center, n.d.). The problem this thesis intends to further address, however, is the “gender-neutral” approach many jurisdictions within the United States criminal justice system have taken in regards to offender rehabilitation.

As of 2021, approximately 72,400 female offenders were housed within United States state prison facilities—with an estimated additional 11,000 incarcerated in federal correctional institutions (Carson, 2022, p. 8). Despite a 25% decline in overall prison population throughout the previous decade, incarceration rates of female offenders have continuously increased (Carson, 2022, p. 6). Widely recognized as a direct consequence of the War on Drugs, incarcerated women now account for 7% of the United States prison population, as opposed to only 4% in the early 1970’s (Carson, 2022, p. 14). Compared to their male counterparts, female offenders are at an increased likelihood of conviction due to a drug-related offense, formal

diagnosis of mental health or substance abuse disorders, previous victimization in the form of child or domestic abuse, and to serve as the single parent of a child under the age of 18 (Bronson, et al, 2020, p. 1; National Institute of Corrections, p. 2; The Sentencing Project, 2020, p. 4; Wright & Cain, 2018, 166-167). Thus, female offenders represent a distinct array of criminogenic risks and needs gender-neutral rehabilitative programming fails to properly address. Subsequently, gender-responsive programming—rehabilitative services designed with specific consideration for the unique risks and needs of female offenders—have been developed in many United States women’s prison facilities.

The following exploratory study intends to provide an extensive investigation of literature pertaining to female incarceration, the implementation of rehabilitative programming in United States correctional institutions, and the importance of gender-responsive programming. Furthermore, the study will comparatively analyze the rehabilitative models of two states, California and North Carolina, with specific consideration for the presence or lack of gender-responsive programming. Utilizing state sponsored agencies, data will be collected regarding the recidivism rate, total female prison population and number of female correctional facilities within each state—as well as the types of rehabilitative programming available to incarcerated females in each institution. The collected data for each of the studied states will be contrasted against that of the opposing state to allow for conclusions to be drawn regarding possible correlations amongst the presence of gender-responsive programming and state female offender population. Furthermore, both policy implications and suggestions for further research will be made upon study conclusion.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina refers to rehabilitation programming as "a strategic plan to encourage and support crime prevention and [community] reentry efforts" (2021). Such programs are essential in combating historically high rates of incarceration and recidivism—specifically amongst female offenders. The following analysis examines the incarceration rates and unique criminogenic risks and needs of female offenders, the history of rehabilitation programming in the United States, and the development, implementation, and success rates of female-specific, gender-responsive programs in correctional facilities.

Incarceration Rates of Female Offenders

As of 2021, 1,204,300 individuals were housed in prison facilities throughout the United States (Carson, 2022, p. 1). This number accounts for both state and federal prisons and represents a steep, 25% decline in total prison population throughout the last decade. Although the COVID-19 pandemic was responsible for the release of numerous inmates in 2020, 2021 marked the eighth consecutive year of prison population decline in the United States (Carson, 2022, p. 6). Contrary to this decline in total prison population, the percentage of female offenders housed in United States prison facilities has increased in recent decades—rising from 4% in 1978 to 7% in 2021 (Carson, 2022, p. 14). Reports published as of 2021 estimate that 60 per 100,000, or a total of 83,349, adult females are currently held within state or federal prison facilities, although over 1,000,000 are believed to be under the supervision of the United States criminal justice system in some form (Carson, 2022, p. 14; The Sentencing Project, 2020, p. 1).

Though female offenders make up a much smaller percentage of the United States prison population than their male counterparts, the current incarceration rate of adult females is double

that of the incarceration rate of males (The Sentencing Project, 2020, p. 1). As the number of arrests for male offenders has decreased 33% throughout the last four decades, the number of arrests for female offenders has increased 25% (Herring, 2020). This increase in female incarceration is widely regarded as a direct consequence of the War on Drugs, declared by President Nixon in 1971 (Wright & Cain, 2018, p. 165). In contrast to male offenders, female offenders have an increased likelihood of incarceration due to a nonviolent drug related offense, as 26% of incarcerated women in state prison facilities and 64% of those in federal prison facilities are serving a drug-related sentence (Carson, 2022, p. 35; The Sentencing Project, 2020, p. 4). Since the War on Drugs began, total arrest rates due to a drug-related offense increased close to 216% for female offenders (Herring, 2020). As a result, it is estimated that $\frac{1}{3}$ of the world's incarcerated females are currently housed in United States prison facilities (Wright & Cain, 2018, p. 163).

Contributing Factors of Incarceration of Females

While female offenders are at an increased likelihood of being convicted of a drug-related offense and a decreased likelihood of committing a violent crime than their male counterparts, they also represent a different array of criminogenic risks and needs—most prevalently, substance abuse. Regarding state prison facilities specifically, the most recent data estimates that 69% of incarcerated females suffer from a diagnosed form of substance abuse or dependence, 31% admit to regular use of methamphetamines, and 22% report continuous use of opiates (Bronson, et al, 2020, pp. 1,9). Comparatively, only 57% of male offenders in state prisons suffer from a diagnosed form of substance abuse, 17% admit methamphetamine use, and 15% report opiate use. Mental health disorders including anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideations are diagnosed more prevalently in female offenders, as 73% of those in state prisons are diagnosed with a form

of mental illness in comparison to only 55% of incarcerated males (Wright & Cain, 2018, p. 167). In addition, rates of diagnosis for co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders for incarcerated females are four times that of males (National Institute of Corrections, p. 1).

Alongside mental health and substance abuse disorders, many incarcerated women suffer from a variety of risks and needs unique to female offenders. A majority of incarcerated females are of low socioeconomic status, living well below the poverty-line. $\frac{2}{3}$ of those housed in state prison facilities report to earning no more than minimum wage, and only $\frac{1}{3}$ report a form of full-time employment prior to incarceration (National Institute of Corrections, p. 2).

Victimization, including both domestic and child abuse, is widely regarded as possible origin of criminal behavior amongst many female offenders, as 70% of incarcerated women report some form of abuse throughout their lifetime (Wright & Cain, 2018, 166). Reports estimate that nearly 71% of all incarcerated women are mothers to a child younger than 18, and 60% will give birth to a child while behind bars (National Institute of Corrections, p. 2). Over 30% of incarcerated women report to be a single parent prior to incarceration in comparison to only 3.9% of their male counterparts, suggesting that familial and parental stresses are risk factors unique to female offenders. As incarcerated women represent a unique demographic of criminal behavior, as well as criminogenic risks and needs, it is essential to provide these offenders with proper rehabilitation and reentry programming.

Reentry Programming in the United States

Upon release from correctional supervision, an estimated 68% of offenders recidivate, finding themselves reincarcerated within three years (National Institute of Justice, 2008). Intended to combat high rates of recidivism, rehabilitation programming has been implemented into many United States correctional facilities. Rehabilitation programs aim to improve the

physical and mental health of offenders, providing incarcerated individuals with education and vocational training to increase prospective employment opportunities—and decrease likelihood of further criminal activity—upon release (National Institute of Justice, 2020). Within the last two decades, the United States government has utilized federal initiatives to facilitate the implementation of such programs in correctional facilities throughout the country.

Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI)

In 2003, the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as the Departments of Education, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services, provided funding to 69 state correctional facilities through the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (National Institute of Justice, 2012). In an effort to further the development of rehabilitation programs, each of the 69 selected institutions—representing the 50 states, U.S. Virgin Islands, and District of Columbia—received between \$500,000 and \$2 million of federal funding between the years of 2003 and 2006 (Winterfield et. al., 2006, p. 5; National Institute of Justice, 2012). The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) required that participating facilities develop three-phase rehabilitation programs, beginning on the date of incarceration, continuing through release, and maintaining support for released individuals in future years. The initiative resulted in the development of 89 re-entry programs, varying in target populations and types of support offered (National Institute of Justice, 2012).

Second Chance Act

On April 9th, 2008, drafted to assist correctional institutions in the development of rehabilitation and reentry programs, the Second Chance Act was passed by the United States Congress (National Reentry Resource Center, n.d.). The act identified six primary objectives regarding offender rehabilitation—to encourage the development of further rehabilitation

programming, to promote law-abiding behavior amongst the public, to provide incarcerated individuals with education and vocational training, to assist in the maintenance of familial relationships, to provide transitional services upon release, and to ultimately eliminate recidivism (Henry, 2009, p. 6). Backed by bipartisan support, the Second Chance Act allocated \$360 million to the development of reentry programming, signaling a significant shift away from “tough on crime” incarceration policies and focusing instead on the rehabilitation of offenders (National Reentry Resource Center, n.d.; Henry, 2009, p.19).

Gender-Responsive Programming

While government initiatives have led to the implementation of rehabilitation and reentry programming in a significant number of correctional facilities across the United States, within many jurisdictions, rehabilitation is viewed through a gender-neutral lens. “Gender-neutral” programs, although originally designed to aid in the rehabilitation of incarcerated males, were implemented into women’s correctional facilities (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020, p. 2). Female offenders, as aforementioned, possess a different array of criminogenic risks and needs than their male counterparts, and thus require a more specialized form of rehabilitation. Subsequently, gender-responsive programming—designed with consideration for the unique factors of female criminality—has been established within the United States criminal justice system (Miller, 2021, p.13)

The process of reentry programming begins with a thorough assessment of the individual offender’s criminogenic risks and needs. Original assessments, intended to be utilized in men’s correctional facilities, have proven to be ineffective when assessing female offenders. As a result, numerous female-specific risks and needs assessments have been developed in recent years, including the Gender Informed Needs Assessment (GINA), Service Planning Instrument

for Women (SPIn-W), COMPAS for Women, and the Women's Risk and Needs Assessment (WRNA) (Miller, 2021). While each assessment was drafted with intent to highlight risks and needs unique to female offenders, the WRNA is the only female-specific risks and needs assessment with substantial data in support of its implementation (Miller, 2021, pp. 13-14). Post-assessment period, female offenders are presented with established programs best equipped to fit their needs, including substance abuse treatment, parental education courses, in-facility childcare, specialized skills training, and job interview preparation (Miller, 2021, p. 13).

In 2003, a report published by the National Institute of Corrections outlined six core-elements of successful gender-responsive programming, beginning with the acknowledgement that female offenders are different from their male counterparts in regards to risks, needs, behavior, and characteristics (Ramirez, n.d., p. 2). The National Institute of Corrections identifies the second core-element of gender-responsive programming as creating an environment for incarcerated females that emphasizes safety and respect in regards to both physical environment and staff behavior (Ramirez, n.d., pp. 2-3). Successful gender-responsive programs are to highlight the importance of maintaining familial and community relationships, and provide adequate treatment for substance abuse, mental illness, and co-occurring disorders. In addition, it is necessary for gender responsive programs to provide incarcerated females with educational opportunities and vocational training to increase the likelihood of financial stability upon release (Ramirez, n.d., p. 3). The National Institute of Corrections recognizes the final core-element as the establishment of transitional services—such as housing, counseling, and childcare—that a female offender may utilize once released from custody (Ramirez, n.d., p. 3-4).

Success of Gender-Responsive Programming

Several years of research affirms that female offenders who participate in gender-responsive rehabilitation programs are significantly more likely to successfully reintegrate into the community and markedly less likely to reoffend. In 2011, a study analyzing programming available to incarcerated females between the years of 1988 and 2008 determined that those who participated in in-facility substance abuse treatment programs decreased their odds of reoffending upon release by 45% (Miller, 2021, p. 14). Additionally, data published in 2016 analyzing 37 individual studies of gender-responsive programming indicated that participating women were between 22 and 35 percent more likely to be considered successfully reintegrated to their communities post-incarceration (Miller, 2021, p. 14; Ramirez, n.d., p. 7). Over 75% of programs analyzed within the 37 studies reported a significant reduction in offender recidivism rates (Miller, 2021, p. 14).

In an analysis of specialized gender-responsive services offered in correctional facilities, it was suggested that substance abuse and psychological treatments such as group counseling and individual therapy sessions were the most effective in reducing recidivism. Furthermore, services that continued to be available to female offenders post-release were found to provide superior results in aiding in a successful reintegration (Miller, 2021, p.14). Gender-responsive programs that provided females with the opportunity to maintain familial and intimate partner relationships throughout the incarceration period were also revealed to significantly lower the risk of reoffense upon release (Ramirez, n.d., p. 3). In an alternative study, the correlation between correctional staff behavior and recidivism rates was heavily emphasized. Female offenders who report positive interactions with correctional staff often receive fewer behavioral infractions while incarcerated and are at a decreased likelihood of recidivism than those who reported negative

interactions, suggesting a need for specialized staff training with consideration of uniquely-female criminogenic risks and needs within correctional facilities (Ramirez, n.d., pp. 2-3).

Conclusion

While 2021 is recognized as the eighth consecutive year of prison population decline in the United States, the percentage of incarcerated females has risen 25% throughout recent decades (Carson, 2022, p. 6; Herring, 2020). Representing 7% of the United States prison population, female offenders possess a different array of criminogenic risks and needs than their male counterparts (Carson, 2022, p. 14). Female offenders are believed to be at an increased likelihood of incarceration due to a drug-related offense and possess an elevated risk of diagnosed substance abuse, mental health, and co-occurring disorders. Additionally, women within the United States criminal justice system are prone to victimization and low socioeconomic status, and often suffer from familial strain throughout the incarceration period.

Upon release from incarceration, roughly $\frac{2}{3}$ of offenders recidivate within three years (National Institute of Justice, 2008). In efforts to combat this considerably high risk of recidivism, correctional facilities throughout the United States have implemented rehabilitation programming, addressing the risks and needs associated with criminal behavior. As female offenders possess a unique set of criminogenic needs, many female correctional facilities have developed gender-responsive rehabilitation programming, targeting factors unique to female criminality. Such programs often involve a female-specific assessment of risks and needs, substance abuse treatment programs, counseling and therapy, education and vocational training, and familial support. Female offenders who participate in gender-responsive programs while under correctional supervision are considered to be at an increased probability of successfully

reintegrating into their community, as well as a decreased likelihood of recidivating upon release, suggesting a need for the development and implementation of such programs in female correctional facilities nationwide.

Chapter III: Methodology

Despite government initiatives such as the Second Chance Act and Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) having aided in the implementation of reentry programming, the federal government has failed to acknowledge a national standard in regards to offender rehabilitation—allocating the task of rehabilitation model development to individual states. While a number jurisdictions have implemented specific, gender-responsive programming in consideration of the unique factors of female criminality, many jurisdictions continue to utilize a “one-size-fits-all” approach to the matter (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020, p. 2). This thesis aims to analyze the availability and potential success of gender-responsive programming in the United States utilizing data from two different states.

Research Design

Sample Selection

For the purposes of this thesis, two states were chosen to be analyzed in regards to rate of recidivism, approach to offender rehabilitation, and development and availability of gender-responsive programming: California and North Carolina. Historically, these states have fallen on opposing ends of the political spectrum, as California typically casts its electoral votes for Democratic candidates, while the battleground state of North Carolina has been known to lean Republican. While party platforms from recent election cycles suggest criminal justice reform to be a matter of bipartisan concern, the two major political parties tend to have varying viewpoints in regards to issues surrounding the criminal justice system—including offender rehabilitation (Camhi, 2016). The potentially different approaches to offender rehabilitation amongst these politically opposing states allows for further comparison in regards to both the availability and success of gender-responsive programming.

Data Collection

Upon selection of the two states to be utilized within this analysis, research began with an examination of the recidivism rate, total female prison population and number of female correctional facilities within each state—as well as the individual facility names, locations, target populations, and security levels. Once each female correctional institution within California and North Carolina was identified, research was conducted on the availability of rehabilitation programs within each institution utilizing state-sponsored agencies. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation provided extensive information surrounding the support available to female offenders located in California, while the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction supplied similar information in regards to female offenders in North Carolina. Both agencies provided an in-depth analysis of the specific, gender-responsive programs developed in each state, as well as a broad overview of the states approach to offender rehabilitation as a whole. Once research was concluded, data from each agency was sorted into various classifications to allow for proper analysis and comparison of rehabilitation program access amongst both states.

Variables

The variables to be analyzed within this thesis, as defined below, depict the classifications of rehabilitative programming commonly offered within correctional facilities—health-based programs, academic and vocational programs, specialized industrial programs, and gender-responsive programs. A fifth variable, additional programs, is reserved for any available rehabilitation programs which do not fit under the umbrella of the previously mentioned categories.

Health-Based Programs. Health-based programs are defined as any program aimed to improve the physiological or psychological well-being of an incarcerated individual. Such programs may include substance abuse treatment, therapeutic initiatives, or standard medical care.

Academic and Vocational Programs. Academic programs are defined as any form of instruction aimed to assist incarcerated individuals in receiving a high school or collegiate-level education. Such programs may include GED assistance or college partnership programs. Additionally, vocational programs are defined as any form of specialized training provided to incarcerated individuals to improve post-incarceration occupational eligibility. Vocational programs may include cosmetology, horticulture, or construction programs.

Specialized Industrial Programs. Specialized industrial programs are defined as any program in which the services of an incarcerated individual, or the goods said individual may produce, benefit public institutions. Such programs may include textile manufacturing, dental services, or auto repair.

Gender-Responsive Programs. Gender-responsive programs are defined as any program aimed to address the unique criminogenic risks and needs of incarcerated women. Such programs may include parental education courses, supervised mother-child reunification programs, and specialized female-victimization therapy programs.

Additional Programs. Additional programs are defined as any program which does not fall under the health-based, educational and vocational, specialized industrial, or gender-responsive umbrellas. Such programs may include religious-based or victim-impact programs.

Analysis Plan

Upon research conclusion, the collected data—the types of programming available to female offenders within each researched facility—will be sorted into the five variables defined above. Alongside a written analysis of results, data will be presented in a table format, allowing for a clearer comparison of which type of programming is most prioritized in each state. Furthermore, data pertaining to the availability of gender-specific programming will be compared against the total female prison population in each state to determine if a larger female offender population may suggest a higher probability of the presence of gender-responsive programming—or if a lower female offender population partnered with the presence of gender-responsive programming suggests program success. Additionally, the overall offender rehabilitation models for both states will be contrasted to determine if state political ideology could potentially affect the further development and implementation of rehabilitative programming. Prior to analysis, it is expected that California, due to its political ideology, will have a slightly-more developed offender rehabilitation model, and thus increased usage of gender-responsive programming, resulting in both a lower overall recidivism rate and total female offender population.

Chapter IV: Findings

California

As of 2022, approximately 3,700 adult females, less than .01% of the state-wide female population, were incarcerated within three California state prison facilities—the California Institution for Women, Central California Women’s Facility, and Folsom State Prison (Human Impact Partners, 2023; United States Census Bureau, 2022). The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation estimates that over 60% of all California prisoners will reoffend within three years of release, suggesting that many of the female offenders housed within these facilities will fall victim to the cycle of recidivism (Law Offices of John D. Rogers, 2023).

To combat historically high rates of recidivism amongst California’s incarcerated population, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has implemented rehabilitative and reentry programs within each adult correctional facility—developing specialized gender-responsive programming for female offenders (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation [CDCR], n.d.-d). The Female Offender Programs and Services department of the CDCR ensures incarcerated females are provided with housing arrangements in which they are treated with dignity and respect, as well as access to rehabilitative programs that target their unique criminogenic risks and needs (CDCR, n.d-e). Additionally, the California Department of Corrections is currently working alongside a team of interdisciplinary consultants to develop a standard for successful offender rehabilitation. Referred to as the “California Model,” the program aims to enhance public safety efforts, improve both living and working conditions within state correctional institutions, and promote successful societal reintegration amongst incarcerated individuals (CDCR, n.d-g).

California Institution for Women

The California Institution for Women—located in Corona, California—houses female offenders of all custody levels, as well as individuals within specialized populations, including expectant mothers and those in need of intense psychological care. Recognized as the first California state prison for female felons, the institution has implemented a variety of rehabilitative programs intended to target the unique criminogenic risks and needs of incarcerated females (CDCR, n.d.-a). Individuals housed within the facility are provided access to standard medical care, behavioral health care, ambulatory care, and substance abuse treatment programs. In regards to unique health-based programs, the California Institution for Women employs an Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT), a “comprehensive and evidence-based cross-divisional program” utilizing several classifications of cognitive behavioral interventions—ranging from 52-week intensive treatment to 14-week outpatient programming (CDCR, n.d.-a).

The California Institution for Women provides incarcerated individuals with a diverse range of academic and educational services, including general education development (GED), high school diploma, and adult basic education (ABE) programs. Additionally, incarcerated females are provided access to numerous associate degree programs through state and community colleges, as well as bachelor’s and master’s degree programs through Adam’s State University (CDCR, n.d.-a). Through the California Prison Industry Authority (PIA), individuals housed in the California Institution for Women may participate in specialized industrial programming, such as construction and clothing and textile manufacturing. Additional available programs include faith-based reentry assistance, victim awareness training, and camping programs. While the California Institution for Women claims to utilize programs that target the

unique needs of female offenders, it provides little in the way of gender-responsive programming aside from specialized care for pregnant individuals.

Central California Women's Facility

Located in Chowchilla, Central California Women's Facility is the largest of three state female prison institutions within California. The facility houses inmates of all custody levels and provides incarcerated individuals with a wide range of rehabilitative programming intended to promote a "successful reintegration into society" (CDCR, n.d.-b). Female offenders housed in the Central California Women's Facility are given access to standard physiological and psychological medical care, as well as Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) programs. Additionally, incarcerated individuals who suffer from substance abuse disorders may participate in the previously described Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT). In regards to available academic and vocational programs, individuals in the Central California Women's Facility may participate in general education development (GED) programs, as well as standard literacy courses and a college degree program through Feather River Community College. Female offenders may also participate in vocational training programs relating to auto-repair, cosmetology, computer and electronic technology, and standard office operations (CDCR, n.d.-b).

Through the California Prison Industry Authority (PIA), incarcerated individuals may engage in fabric product and garment development, farming, silk screening, and hands-on work in a dental laboratory. Additionally, a private organization known as Joint Venture Electronics provides 45 inmates at the Central California Women's Facility with employment opportunities through an electronic manufacturing program. Participants are compensated for their time in the form of family support, victim compensation costs, and post-release savings (CDCR, n.d.-b).

Additional available programs include community service, worship services, art therapy programs, and victim impact training. In regards to gender-responsive programming, the Central California Women’s Facility provides female offenders access to an on-site family reunification liaison and case-manager. The liaison works with incarcerated individuals to prepare for family reunification post-release through parenting and conflict-resolution courses, as well as post-incarceration planning (CDCR, n.d.-b).

Folsom State Prison

In 2013, Folsom State Prison—originally a male-only institution—opened its Folsom State Prison B Facility to over 500 medium custody female offenders. Located in Represa, California, the female facility is the northernmost female prison institution in the state (CDCR, n.d.-f).

Although the Folsom State Prison facility appears to provide inmates with a variety of rehabilitative and reentry programming, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) does not provide distinction between programming offered at the Prison A (male) and Prison B (female) facilities. The following information is reported under the assumption individuals at each Folsom State Prison facility are provided with equal access to available programs.

Folsom State Prison provides incarcerated individuals with access to standard medical care, Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and “healthy living” and fitness based health programs. Additionally, much like female offenders housed at the California Institution for Women and Central California Women’s Facility, individuals housed within the Folsom State Prison are provided access to Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT) to combat substance abuse disorders (CDCR, n.d.-f). In regards to academic and vocational programming, Folsom State Prison provides incarcerated individuals with general

education development (GED), adult basic education (ABE), adult high school (AHS), and English as a second language (ESL) programs. The institution claims to provide offenders access to college programs, although information as to what these programs entail has yet to be published. Offenders may participate in vocational training programs relating to masonry, standard office operations, welding, and auto repair. A specialized four week employment program, New Start, provides incarcerated individuals with resume and job application assistance, financial literacy courses, and interview preparation (CDCR, n.d.-f). Through the California Prison Industry Authority (PIA), incarcerated individuals may participate in specialized industrial programming, including license plate and sign manufacturing, furniture manufacturing, printing, and digital mapping (CDCR, n.d.-f).

Additional available programs include specialized veteran treatment and post-incarceration preparation programs. In regards to gender-responsive programming, individuals housed within the Folsom State Prison facility are provided access to an on-site family reunification liaison and case-manager to prepare for family reunification upon release. Additionally, incarcerated individuals may participate in parenting courses throughout the incarceration period (CDCR, n.d.-f).

Table I. Program Availability: California

	Health-Based Programs	Academic and Vocational Programs	Specialized Industrial Programs	Gender-Responsive Programs	Additional Programs
California Institution for Women	X	X	X		X
Central California Women's Facility	X	X	X	X	X
Folsom State Prison	X	X	X	X	X

North Carolina

As of 2017, 2,634 adult females, less than .05% of the state-wide female population, were housed within three North Carolina state correctional institutions—the Anson Correctional Institution, NC Correctional Institution for Women, and Western Correctional Center for Women (Vera Institute of Justice, 2019; Stanford, 2018). The United States Bureau of Justice Assistance estimates that approximately 40% of adult individuals released from North Carolina correctional institutions will fall victim to the cycle of recidivism, however North Carolina state agency reports estimate the rate of recidivism may be as high as 49% (Criminon, n.d.).

Aimed to promote offender rehabilitation and facilitate social reintegration, the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (NDAC) offers a variety of reentry services in each adult state correctional institution, with state-wide standards in regards to physical and behavioral health, as well as education (North Carolina Department of Adult Correction [NDAC], n.d.-f). Under the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction, each prison facility

is equipped with a physical health care team capable of performing standard, emergency, and preventative healthcare services, as well as a staff of dental-professionals able to address both routine and emergency dental procedures. Additionally, state correctional institutions provide incarcerated individuals access to a variety of behavioral healthcare services, including in-patient psychiatric care at two prison facilities—the Central Prison and NC Correctional Institution for Women (NDAC, n.d.-c). Although alcohol and substance dependency treatment programs are available to incarcerated individuals within many correctional facilities, specialized, NDAC developed programs are implemented only at select institutions (NDAC, n.d.-a). In regards to education, the North Carolina Prisons Education Services department provides incarcerated individuals with a variety of academic programming intended to both improve intelligence and connect offenders with post-release occupational opportunities (NDAC, n.d.-d).

Anson Correctional Institution

Anson Correctional Institution, located in Polkton, North Carolina, houses both medium custody female offenders and minimum custody male offenders (NDAC, n.d.-b). Although the Anson Correctional Institution provides rehabilitative services to incarcerated individuals, the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (NDAC) does not provide distinction between programs available to male and female offenders. The following information is reported under the assumption that both male and female inmates are given equal access to available rehabilitative programs.

In regards to health-based programs, the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction provides little information on the health services available to incarcerated individuals in specific institutions, but rather states that standard medical care, emergency medical care, dental services, and behavioral health services are available to individuals in all North Carolina adult institutions

(NDAC, n.d.-b). The Anson Correctional Institution provides incarcerated individuals with access to general education development (GED) and adult basic education (ABE) programs, as well as college education courses through the University of North Carolina university system. Offenders housed in the Anson Correctional Institution may also participate in vocational courses relating to horticulture, carpentry and masonry, plumbing, light construction and electrical wiring, and residential maintenance. Through the Prison Industry Enhancement Program (PIE), incarcerated individuals may participate in a commercial packing specialized industrial program—through which offenders package and ship products purchased for inmates from outside family members or friends—as well as a metal production program (NDAC, n.d-b).

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction does not provide information on any additional programs available at the Anson Correctional Institution, nor does it discuss any gender-responsive programs available to incarcerated females.

NC Correctional Institution for Women

Located in Raleigh, North Carolina, the NC Correctional Institution for Women is the primary female state prison facility within North Carolina. Housing the largest population of inmates in the state, the institution contains female offenders of all custody levels, including those on death row. Aside from the standard medical, dental, and behavioral health care available at every adult prison institution in North Carolina, the NC Correctional Institution for Women provides incarcerated individuals with access to alcohol and chemical dependency treatment programs. Additionally, the institution contains beds for ten inpatient female psychiatric care patients (NDAC, n.d.-e). In regards to academic and vocational programming, incarcerated individuals may participate in general education development (GED) and adult basic education (ABE) programs, as well as vocational courses relating to horticulture, cosmetology, and

dentistry in a hands-on dental laboratory. Female offenders housed in the NC Correctional Institution for Women may also participate in a Job Start program to prepare them for employment post-incarceration. Available specialized industrial programs include license plate manufacturing, commercial sewing, and printing and duplicating. Additionally, incarcerated females may seek employment at the North Carolina tourism call center (NDAC, n.d-e).

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction does not provide information on any additional programs available to females housed in the NC Correctional Institution for Women. In regards to gender-responsive programming, incarcerated females are provided access to a Mothers and their Children (MATCH), a non-profit organization aiming to foster healthy familial relationships between incarcerated mothers and their children throughout the incarceration period. MATCH provides incarcerated mothers with courses relating to parenting and healthy relationship development, as well as a safe, “home-like” environment in which children may visit and connect and interact with their mothers (Mothers and their Children, n.d.).

Western Correctional Center for Women

The Western Correctional Center for Women, located in Black Mountain, North Carolina, houses female offenders in a minimum custody setting (NDAC, n.d.-g). The institution provides incarcerated individuals with a variety of rehabilitation and reentry services, including standard physical, dental, and behavioral health care. In regards to academic programming, female offenders housed in the Western Correctional Center for Women are provided access to general education development (GED) and adult basic education (ABE) programs. Additionally, the Western Correctional Center for Women provides incarcerated individuals access to two unique college-education programs—a study release program through Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College and an Inside-Out partnership with Warren Wilson College. Through the

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College study release program, incarcerated females nearing the end of their incarceration period are provided the opportunity to attend college courses outside of the correctional institution setting (NDAC, n.d.-g). The Warren Wilson College Inside-Out program, however, provides female offenders with access to college-level courses within the Western Correctional Center for Women's facility, utilizing educational partnerships with non-incarcerated college students to further facilitate comprehension. The Warren Wilson College Inside-Out program is the only program of its type within North Carolina (Warren Wilson College, 2023).

Female offenders housed within the Western Correctional Center for Women may also participate in vocational courses relating to hospitality, horticulture, computer skills and maintenance, and veterinary medicine. Incarcerated individuals may also participate in courses relating to financial responsibility and employment to prepare for life post-incarceration. The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction does not provide information regarding specialized industrial programming available to offenders within the facility, nor does it report the implementation of any gender-responsive programming. Additional available programs include religious and worship-centered services.

Table II. Program Availability: North Carolina

	Health-Based Programs	Academic and Vocational Programs	Specialized Industrial Programs	Gender-Responsive Programs	Additional Programs
Anson Correctional Institution	X	X	X		
NC Correctional Institution for Women	X	X	X	X	
Western Correctional Center for Women	X	X			X

Chapter V: Discussion

Each of the six correctional institutions analyzed within this study, three maintained by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and three by the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (NCDAC), provide incarcerated females with access to a variety of health based, academic, and vocational programs. As depicted in Table II, within North Carolina, specialized-industrial programs are present at two women's prison facilities, and additional rehabilitative services are available to female offenders at one. California, however, provides both specialized-industrial programs and additional rehabilitative services to incarcerated individuals at each of its three correctional facilities, as illustrated in Table I. In regards to gender-specific programs, North Carolina, a state in which approximately .05% of the adult female population is housed within state prison facilities, provides gender-responsive programs to incarcerated females in only one of its three correctional institutions. Within California, a state in which less than .01% of the adult female population is housed within state prison facilities, gender-responsive programs are available to incarcerated females at two correctional institutions.

Policy Implications

Prior to data collection, it was hypothesized that California, due to its political ideology, would have a slightly-more developed rehabilitation model in comparison to North Carolina. Upon thorough analysis of the rehabilitative programming available to incarcerated individuals within California and North Carolina correctional facilities, this hypothesis appears to be true. In regards to the rehabilitative models of each state, without specific consideration towards the presence or absence of gender-responsive programming, the California model appears to be slightly more cohesive, well-developed, and accessible to offenders than that of North Carolina,

as depicted in Tables I and II. As hypothesized, this suggests a potential correlation between political ideology and viewpoints in regards to issues surrounding the criminal justice system, therefore suggesting a relationship between political ideology and the implementation and development of rehabilitative programming within correctional institutions.

Under the assumption that this correlation remains true throughout states not analyzed within this study, two suggestions may be made in regards to policy—increased rehabilitative efforts within conservative-leaning states and implementation of a federal offender reentry policy. Although increased rehabilitative efforts within conservative-leaning states may give rise to more cohesive and accessible rehabilitation models within individual states, a federally-drafted reentry policy would eliminate variation amongst states and more specifically, amongst varying political ideations. Despite development of a cohesive and easily-accessible rehabilitation model, California maintains a rate of recidivism roughly 10-20% higher than that of North Carolina, potentially calling into question the overall success of utilized rehabilitative programming (Criminon, n.d.; Law Offices of John D. Rogers, 2023). If a federally-mandated offender reentry model is to be created, extensive research regarding successful rehabilitative efforts is essential to its development.

In addition to maintaining a cohesive and well-developed overall rehabilitation model, California appears slightly more successful than North Carolina in regards to the implementation of gender-responsive programming. Prior to data collection, two potential associations regarding gender-responsive programming and female offender populations were emphasized—a larger female offender population within a single state may increase probability of the presence of gender-responsive programming (positive correlation), or a lower female offender population within a single state, partnered with the presence of gender-responsive programming, may

suggest program success (negative correlation). California, despite housing a female offender population approximately five times smaller than that of North Carolina, provides gender-responsive programming to female offenders in two prison facilities, as opposed to only one in North Carolina. Upon thorough analysis of these findings, it appears the second association holds true and the correlation existing between gender-responsive programming and female offender populations is negative. Under the assumption that this correlation remains true throughout states not analyzed within this study, two suggestions may be made in regards to the further development and implementation of gender-responsive programs—increased effort towards the implementation of gender-responsive programming within individual states wishing to decrease female offender populations and development of a federally-mandated gender-responsive offender rehabilitation program in hopes to decrease female offender populations nation-wide. Potential federally-developed female rehabilitation models should implement utilization of female-specific risks and needs assessments, physiological and behavioral health assistance, educational and vocational programs, familial support, and substance abuse treatment programs to properly address the unique criminogenic risks and needs of female offenders (Miller, 2021, p. 16).

Limitations

The conclusions of this study suffer multiple limitations in regards to validity—specifically in relation to generalizability. Namely, this study, although extensive, analyzes the rehabilitative models of only two states. If the conclusions and suggestions within this study are to be considered valid, data regarding the rehabilitation and reentry efforts of the remaining 48 states must be documented, analyzed, and properly compared and contrasted. Additionally, this study only analyzes traditional state prison facilities, and does not account for

additional correctional venues maintained under state supervision. For example, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) operates 35 minimum-security fire camp programs, two of which are reserved for female offender participation. Within said programs, correctional staff supervise inmates as they assist government agencies in their response to natural disasters (CDCR, n.d.-c). To allow for further comprehension of state-wide rehabilitative programs, all additional state correctional venues, such as the California Fire Camps, must be analyzed. Furthermore, although this study provides an extensive exploration of the presence of gender-responsive programming within state correctional facilities, it provides little insight into the statistical success of said programs. Further analysis of program success is essential in future research endeavors.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to provide a comprehensive review of literature regarding the importance of gender-responsive rehabilitative programming in women's prison facilities and to comparatively analyze the accessibility of said programs for incarcerated females within the states of California and North Carolina. Utilizing state sponsored-agencies—the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the North Carolina Department of Adult Corrections (NCDAC)—data pertaining to the rehabilitative programs available to female offenders within California and North Carolina women's prison facilities was collected and analyzed, with specific consideration to the presence or lack of gender-responsive programming. The initial analysis of results suggest California to have a more thoroughly-developed and cohesive offender rehabilitation model in regards to overall prison population, as well as increased implementation of gender-responsive programming in state women's prison facilities in comparison to North Carolina. The findings of the study presented within this thesis suggest a

negative correlation exists amongst gender-responsive programming and female offender populations, and as previously published studies have confirmed, said programming is essential to properly address the unique criminogenic risks and needs of female offenders and successfully lessen their likelihood of recidivism upon release. Looking forward, the conclusions drawn from the data presented within this thesis lay the foundation for further research pertaining to the accessibility and success of gender-responsive programming in women's prison facilities in each of the 50 states, as well as federal prison facilities.

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