

Saint Louis University Public Law Review

Volume 33

Number 2 *The 2013 National Conference on Prison
Higher Education Hosted by the Saint Louis University
Program (Volume XXXIII, No. 2)*

Article 5

2014

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Recommended Citation

Bannon, Susannah (2014) "Why Do They Do It?: Motivations of Educators in Correctional Facilities," *Saint Louis University Public Law Review*: Vol. 33 : No. 2 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://scholarship.law.slu.edu/plr/vol33/iss2/5>

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WHY DO THEY DO IT?: MOTIVATIONS OF EDUCATORS IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

SUSANNAH BANNON*

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2010, prison education programs reported just over 70,000 students enrolled in college-level classes, but this number only represents 6 percent of the prison population.¹ An estimated 40 percent of those serving time in federal, state, or community supervision do not possess a high school diploma or GED.² The need for educational programs in correctional facilities far exceeds the current availability.³ Much of the research of postsecondary prison education focuses on the impact of education on recidivism; however, the contributions of educators delivering postsecondary education to incarcerated students while they are in prison is often overlooked.⁴ Teachers of incarcerated students have unique motivation and dedication to their profession.⁵ Teachers are often motivated by their relationships with students, and they contribute to the institutions where they work based on that motivation.⁶ Moreover, little attention has been paid to organizational functioning, which may be improved by motivated educators working for little or no pay as *ad hoc* members of the prison staff.

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1. LAURA E. GORGOL & BRIAN A. SPONSLER, INST. FOR HIGHER EDUC. POL'Y, UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: RESULTS OF A NATIONAL SURVEY OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN STATE PRISONS 3 (2011).

2. CAROLINE WOLF HARLOW, BUREAU OF JUST. STAT., U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., EDUCATION AND CORRECTIONAL POPULATIONS 1, 2 (2003).

3. *See id.*

4. Timothy M. Osberg & Stephen E. Fraley, *Faculty Perceptions of Teaching in a Prison College Program: Motivations, Barriers, Suggestions for Improvement, and Perceived Equivalence to Traditional College Programs*, 44 J. CORR. EDUC. 20, 20–21 (1993).

5. Richard Tewksbury, *On The Margins of Two Professions: Job Satisfaction and Stress Among Post-Secondary Correctional Educators*, 18 AM. J. CRIM. JUST. 61, 65 (1993).

6. *Id.* at 64.

To understand the total impact and relative importance of education in the prison system, it is essential to explore the motivations and experiences of educators who deliver instruction to incarcerated students. Specifically, this study seeks to challenge the idea that incapable, unworthy inmate-student learners gain little from the services of educators who teach them while in prisons. In doing so, this essay will begin to shed light on the unique teacher-student relationships forged between teachers and incarcerated students that create motivation and incentive for teachers who act as *ad hoc* organizational staff members in the prisons where they work. The most common motivations reported by faculty when deciding to teach in prison rather than the traditional college are characteristics perceived in the incarcerated student: eagerness to learn and willingness to engage in discussion.⁷ Yet, it is not just students who benefit from educational opportunities in prisons; teachers report satisfaction through: potentially transforming the lives of their students and the institutions where they work; contributing to the rehabilitation of prisoners; providing educational opportunities to the under resourced; and contributing to their own self-improvement.⁸ Intrinsically motivated teachers who choose to work in the prison system, despite lacking funding, insufficient materials, and organizational obstacles, serve as a lens for better understanding the larger contributions and outcomes of the prison student-teacher relationship.

This study used an inductive approach, employing grounded theory, to examine how significant relationships between inmate learners and their instructors are reflected in messages recalled by instructors. As such, the following research question was asked: How do teachers' motivational experiences differ when working with incarcerated versus non-incarcerated students? Grounded theory is used to describe the phenomenon of memorable messages as they relate to the motivations and organizational contributions of correctional educators. Grounded theory is the process of systematically discovering the essence of a particular process,⁹ such as the role of prison educators and their motivations for working in the prison environment.

The educational and cultural benefits of relationships between educators and incarcerated students have the potential to create a positive ripple effect in individuals, families, and communities far beyond the prison gates and pickets.¹⁰ In other words, prisons understaffed and under-funded gain little or

7. Osberg & Fraley, *supra* note 4, at 23.

8. Tewksbury, *supra* note 5, at 65, 73.

9. See JULIET CORBIN & ANSELM STRAUSS, *BASICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES FOR DEVELOPING GROUND THEORY* 1 tbl.1.1.1 (3d ed. 2008).

10. See LAURA WINTERFIELD ET AL., JUST. POL'Y CTR., URBAN INST., *THE EFFECTS OF POSTSECONDARY CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION: FINAL REPORT 6* (2009) (discussing how postsecondary education programs had "positively affected [the student's] self-esteem" and students felt they had the "ability to be hired for a better job in which they could invest their futures").

no cost contributions from educators working in their organization.¹¹ Educators in prison do more than just deliver curriculum to their students. An estimated 657,411 incarcerated individuals were released into society in the United States in 2012.¹² Those who attempt to reenter society without an education or skills to improve their employability are 46 percent more likely to return to criminal behavior and recidivate.¹³ The positive impact postsecondary education has on recidivism rates is not the only outcome worthy of noting. Effects of postsecondary education in prison begins at the individual level; students and teachers feel good about their contributions in the classroom, resulting in higher self-esteem.¹⁴ The positive sense of self contributes to an improvement in behavior in student inmates, creating a safer prison environment for the rest of the population and administrators.¹⁵

Beyond the prison, family, friends, and others with whom the former inmate maintains an interpersonal relationship benefit from their ability to argue rationally and appreciate alternative viewpoints, two cognitive outcomes associated with receiving postsecondary education while incarcerated.¹⁶ Students who complete a postsecondary education in prison are often the first in their families to do so; this opens the door for children and other family members to make education a personal goal. The ripple effects of postsecondary education in prisons reach the economy at the national level, as receiving an education prior to release from prison leads to greater employability; employment means less reliance on government assistance programs such as welfare and food subsidies, and allows for more meaningful contributions to society by becoming part of consumer culture.¹⁷

Based upon the research conducted, this essay contributes a greater understanding of the individual and organizational benefits derived from the work of motivated educators who serve in an invisible education system. Section II provides a brief overview of research on intrinsic and extrinsic sources of work-related motivation: basic factors of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the workplace, specific concepts of motivators specific to teachers in higher education, and findings of research conducted on the

11. HARLOW, *supra* note 2, at 5.

12. E. ANN CARSON & DANIELA GOLINELLI, BUREAU OF JUST. STAT., NCJ 243920, PRISONERS IN 2012: TRENDS IN ADMISSIONS AND RELEASES, 1991-2012, at 4 tbl.2 (2013), available at www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/platar9112.pdf; David Skorton & Glenn Altschuler, *College Behind Bars: How Educating Prisoners Pays Off*, FORBES (Mar. 25, 2013), <http://www.forbes.com/sites/collegeprose/2013/03/25/college-behind-bars-how-educating-prisoners-pays-off>.

13. *Id.*

14. WINTERFIELD ET AL., *supra* note 10, at v.

15. *Id.* at 9.

16. *See id.* at 6.

17. Skorton & Altschuler, *supra* note 12.

motivations of correctional educators. Section III positions the memorable messages framework in the classroom context as a tool for examining the motivations of correctional educators. Section IV details the process of carrying out this study with descriptions of the sampling, recruitment, and data collection procedures as well as any limitations of the study. Concluding with Section V, data tables representing results of the qualitative analysis complement a discussion of findings, reviewing what the results tell us about the relationships formed in the correctional classroom and how these findings contribute to a study of higher education in the U.S. prison system.

II. MOTIVATIONS OF EDUCATORS IN THE CORRECTIONAL SETTING

Scholars including Frederick Herzberg and A.H. Maslow discussed extrinsic and intrinsic motivations that influence professional decisions. Herzberg identified two factors contributing to the job satisfaction and motivation of workers: hygiene factors and motivators.¹⁸ Extrinsic factors such as working conditions, supervision, salary, and safety all contribute to job satisfaction, commitment, and mastery of job skills among workers; motivators are the intrinsic, or internal, sources of satisfaction according to Herzberg's two-factor model.¹⁹ Maslow's theory of self-actualization served as a foundation for Herzberg's concept of motivators.²⁰ Examples of job-related motivators include work itself, recognition, responsibility, achievement and growth, and advancement.²¹ Additionally, Richard Ryan and Edward Deci identified primarily psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) as the driving force behind intrinsic motivation for workers.²²

In studies of job satisfaction and motivation in higher education, research has shown positive relationships among factors such as salary, total work hours, and control over career path.²³ For educators working in correctional and non-correctional settings, extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors may differ based on personal and professional rewards derived from their specific

18. FREDERICK HERZBERG ET AL., *THE MOTIVATION TO WORK* 113–14 (2d ed. 1959).

19. *Id.*

20. A.H. Maslow, *A Theory of Human Motivation*, 50 *PSYCHOL. REV.* 370, 383–84 (1943) (describing self-actualization as both the result and process of a person becoming all they can be after having all of their humanistic needs met). A self-actualized person lives for a purpose beyond themselves, beyond extrinsic sources of motivation, and is focused on intrinsic motivations within themselves.

21. HERZBERG ET AL., *supra* note 18, at 59.

22. Richard Ryan & Edward Deci, *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions*, 25 *CONTEMP. EDUC. PSYCHOL.* 54, 57 (2000).

23. Ryan Smerek & Marvin Peterson, *Examining Herzberg's Theory: Improving Job Satisfaction Among Non-Academic Employees at a University*, 48 *RES. HIGH. EDUC.* 229, 241–49 (2006).

roles in each organization and their individual relationships with students.²⁴ In fact, research on sources of motivation among educators suggests differing organizational role perceptions can lead to different levels of job satisfaction among teachers.²⁵ For correctional educators, many of whom are volunteers, extrinsic factors of motivation are likely secondary to the intrinsic motivations derived from interpersonal relationships with incarcerated students.

Existing research on educators working in prisons reveals several important trends. First, despite the limited educational backgrounds and low literacy levels of many inmates,²⁶ Tina Edwards-Willey and Nadia Chivers revealed that prison educators delivering college classes had similar expectations for their incarcerated students to their expectations of students in traditional college settings.²⁷ The reasons for their similar expectations were that although inmate students had less access to educational resources for learning material, teachers in this study perceived inmate-students as more motivated to learn and more committed to the understanding and mastering the content delivered as part of each class.²⁸ Similarly, Timothy Osberg and Stephen Fraley noted that prison students are rated as more motivated, inquisitive, and attentive than students in non-correctional college courses.²⁹ The most common motivations reported by faculty in deciding to teach in the prison setting, rather than the traditional college setting, are two characteristics perceived in the prison student: eagerness to learn and willingness to engage in discussion.³⁰ Additional motivational factors reported by correctional faculty included a need to assist in the rehabilitation of prisoners, or helping the less fortunate, in addition to working on their own self-improvement.³¹

In one of the original studies of correctional education, Richard Tewksbury reported that teachers in correctional settings had high levels of job satisfaction stemming from their sense of social compensation, defined by a process of affirmation of their roles as educators, and feelings of achievement reflected in the learning behaviors of their students.³² The same study also found that the institutional environment allowed and encouraged instructors “to pursue their professional goals in manner that was defined by having the most potential for

24. Tewksbury, *supra* note 5, at 65–68.

25. Sal Corbin, *Role Perceptions and Job Satisfaction of Community College Faculty*, 6 INQUIRY 61, 62–64 (2001).

26. See HARLOW, *supra* note 2, at 1.

27. Tina Edwards-Willey & Nadia Chivers, *Perceptions of Inmate-Students’ Ability to Succeed*, 56(1) J. CORR. EDUC. 65, 83 (2005).

28. *Id.* at 81–82.

29. Osberg & Fraley, *supra* note 4, at 24–25.

30. *Id.* at 23.

31. Tewksbury, *supra* note 5, at 73.

32. *Id.* at 64–65.

reward and gratification.”³³ In turn, prison educators have the potential to greatly impact the organizational culture within which they work and transform the lives of students who benefit from their instruction.³⁴

III. MEMORABLE MESSAGES IN THE CLASSROOM

Personal motivational factors are often subconscious, and therefore accurate measurement of motivation can be difficult to achieve.³⁵ Communication scholars have used the memorable message framework to uncover personal motivations derived from relationships and experiences in a variety of contexts.³⁶ “Memorable messages” are messages that when recalled can act as guides for subsequent behavior.³⁷ The orally delivered messages are personally involving, short in length, important to the recipient, may be applied to multiple contexts, and are from a source who is respected.³⁸ The difference between memorable messages and every other message a person receives is the fact that the brain codes certain messages as important pieces of information and subsequently stores memorable messages as a tool to guide future decisions.³⁹ The messages may then serve as prescriptive for future behavior, dictating how to solve a problem or cope with a difficult situation.⁴⁰ In terms of teacher motivation, memorable messages may serve to remind individuals why they do what they do, guiding future behavior by preventing burnout and low job satisfaction. While much research has been done on teacher-student communication, few have looked at the context of correctional education.

IV. CONDUCTING A STUDY OF TEACHER-STUDENT COMMUNICATION IN THE PRISON CLASSROOM

A. *Participants*

A sample of twenty-one prison educator participants was recruited using social media websites, list-service email groups, and flyers distributed at an academic conference. The only inclusion criterion for the study was that participants must have worked as an educator in at least one correctional facility and at least one traditional/non-correctional facility setting. Because of

33. *Id.* at 73.

34. *See id.* at 73–74.

35. Sandi Smith & Jennifer Butler-Ellis, *Memorable Messages as Guides to Self-Assessment of Behavior: An Initial Investigation*, 68 COMM. MONOGRAPHS 154, 157 (2001).

36. *See* Samantha Nazione et al., *Memorable Messages for Navigating College Life*, 39 J. APPLIED COMM. RES. 123, 124–25 (2011).

37. Smith & Butler-Ellis, *supra* note 35, at 154.

38. *See generally* Mark L. Knapp et al., “Memorable” Messages, 31 J. COMM. 27 (1981).

39. Smith & Butler-Ellis, *supra* note 35, at 156.

40. *See* Nazione et al., *supra* note 36, at 125–26.

the specialized target population, a snowball sampling method was used. “Snowball,” or chain referral, sampling is when recruitment is based on “referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest.”⁴¹ The prison educator population is not easily accessible. Due to the protected nature of their students and the sensitive nature of the prison system as a whole, as well as the scattering of the target population across the United States, snowball sampling was the best fit for this study. Researchers first contacted individuals who met the inclusion criteria and requested their assistance in locating eligible participants via email and social networking. Flyers containing the study information, including a request for recruitment assistance, were then distributed at an academic conference on higher education in prisons.

The final sample was predominantly female (81.3 percent), in their late thirties (the mean age of the sample was 39.18 years), and had an average of 11.13 years of teaching experience—37.5 percent of the participants had a doctoral degree, 56.3 percent attained a master’s degree, and 6.3 percent had a bachelor’s degree.⁴² The population consisted of 87.5 percent white/non-Hispanic and 12.5 percent Hispanic/Latino.⁴³ The sample was asked to complete a web-based questionnaire assessing their experiences while teaching in classrooms inside and outside the correctional setting.

B. Procedures

Following recruitment and consent, participants responded to a web-based questionnaire that included questions about their experiences with students in correctional facilities and in traditional educational settings. Data about students in traditional educational settings was collected to juxtapose teachers’ experiences with incarcerated students. Specific items tapped into participants’ levels of job satisfaction, perceptions of students, access to instructional technology and materials, and memorable messages received from students. With the exception of demographic data, participants responded to each item twice, once to describe memorable messages from students in correctional facilities and once to describe messages from non-incarcerated students. The goal was to separate participants’ general motivations for teaching from motivations specifically related to their roles as prisons educators, and help participants make distinctions between relational and organizational issues in the two contexts based on significant memories.

The memorable message framework was employed to help uncover motivational factors rooted in participants’ lived experiences in correctional

41. Patrick Biernacki & Dan Waldorf, *Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling*, 10 SOC. METHODS & RES. 141, 141 (1981).

42. Research on file with the author.

43. Research on file with the author.

and non-correctional settings. A definition of memorable messages and examples of such messages was provided on the web based survey, and participants were asked to list memorable messages received from incarcerated students and then describe whether and how the educator responded to each student's comment. The same process was repeated to gather memorable messages from non-incarcerated students.

C. *Limitations*

A primary limitation in this study is the homologous make up of participants. Many prison educators are volunteers, which indicate a dedication to the cause of prison education as opposed to working for livelihood. There is a potentially underrepresented group in prison educators who have not had positive outcomes of their work in correctional settings. Because of this gap, generalizing of findings is not possible. An additional limitation in findings is the selected states and prisons in which my participants work, which do not represent the entire prison education system. An additional limitation is in a key tool of data collection: memory. Memories are often inaccurate or selective,⁴⁴ and this must be taken into consideration when also considering the potentially biased nature of the sample population.

V. MAKING SENSE OF MEMORABLE MESSAGES IN THE PRISON CLASSROOM

In order to address the research question for this study, memorable messages from incarcerated and non-incarcerated students were coded, and themes were identified to explore teachers' motivations that were specifically related to the prison setting. Content categories emerged from the qualitative survey response data via the grounded theory approach of constant comparison.⁴⁵ In repeated listening, viewing, and reading of the participants' responses, seventy-five open-ended responses from participants were coded to extract themes and examples of their motivations and experiences with incarcerated and non-incarcerated students. Each memorable message was examined to reveal its relationship with teacher motivations in each teaching context. From the 233 individual statements coded, forty codes emerged. Constant comparison analysis resulted in seven categories, including memorable messages reflecting students' evaluation of the class, evaluation of the instructor, expressions of gratitude, figurative expressions, internal personal outcomes, external personal outcomes, and superlative expressions.

44. Sandi W. Smith et al., *Action Tendency Emotions Evoked by Memorable Breast Cancer Messages and their Association with Prevention and Detection Behaviors*, 25 HEALTH COMM. 737, 738 (2010).

45. See CORBIN & STRAUSS, *supra* note 9, at 104–05.

Table 1 provides examples of each of these categories from incarcerated and non-incarcerated students.⁴⁶

TABLE 1
MEMORABLE MESSAGES

<i>Memorable Message Category</i>	<i>Memorable Messages of Incarcerated Students</i>	<i>Memorable Messages of Non-Incarcerated Students</i>
<i>Evaluation of Course</i>	<p>I love history.</p> <p>I love how these works relate to my personal experience.</p> <p>I like the open discussion in class.</p>	<p>I hated all the in-class discussions.</p> <p>I liked that it was challenging and I felt I learned a lot.</p> <p>I enjoyed learning how to write different sorts of papers.</p>
<i>Evaluation of Instructor</i>	<p>You seem to love what you do.</p> <p>You treat us like real college students.</p> <p>You don't judge us.</p> <p>You are tough.</p>	<p>You are very organized and it made everything easy to follow.</p> <p>Laid-back personality, humor, and an extensive knowledge of material.</p> <p>She is funny, outgoing, and very intelligent.</p> <p>You made me laugh in class.</p>
<i>Gratitude</i>	<p>Thank you for caring about us.</p> <p>Thank you for sharing your life with us.</p>	<p>Thanks for working with me on my paper.</p> <p>Thanks for helping me speak in front of people.</p>

46. See *infra* Table 1.

	Thank you for every second you spend away from your family on our behalf.	Thanks for teaching us how to really think about math.
<i>Impact of Experience-External</i>	This class gave me a reason to get up in the morning. I forget I'm in prison when I'm in this class. We look forward to Friday all week.	I learned a lot in your class. Your grading is unfair; I didn't get as high a grade as I wanted (or that my friend did). I am a better writer now.
<i>Figurative /Affective</i>	You are like blood in my system. You are saving our lives. Thank you for helping be become human again.	I love the professor. You are a rockstar! He blew my mind.
<i>Impact of Experience-Internal</i>	If I had taken this class years ago, I probably would not be here today. My favorite thing I read this semester was my own poem, because it was my first poem. I believe in myself again.	You really made me think. Professor helped me to think and see differently. Thinking more critically now.
<i>Superlative/Sycophantic</i>	I feel equal here; not looked at as an inmate. This is the most important class I've ever taken.	Favorite teacher ever. My favorite class ever.

I've learned more than I ever have before.	Best teacher I've ever had.
One of the best teachers to come into the prison.	I took this class because I saw you were the professor.

Students' *classroom evaluations* included memorable messages reflecting course assignments and general mechanics of learning. These messages revealed how students viewed their teachers as responsible for course design that was engaging or easy to master. Similarly, students' *instructor evaluations* included memorable messages reflecting teachers' character traits and personalities. These messages reveal how students viewed their teachers as responsible for classroom immediacy behaviors and entertainment. Students' *expressions of gratitude* included memorable messages reflecting appreciation for the teachers' presence in the classroom and general assistance with learning. These messages reveal how students view their instructors as providing a valuable service. Students' *figurative expressions* included memorable messages reflecting encoded affect for the teachers.

Individuals use figurative language such as metaphor, idiom, and simile, when describing deeply affective experiences or emotions that they find difficulty in expressing.⁴⁷ The significance of the figurative category lies in its reflection of the emotional essence of the student-teacher relationship. Students' *internal personal outcomes* included memorable messages that reveal how students' view themselves in light of impact of the educational experience and their relationship with their teachers. These are self-reflexive expressions characterized by abilities realized, areas of personal improvement, and effects on their overall self-concept. Similarly, students' *external personal outcomes* included messages that reveal how they perceived the impacts of the educational experience and their relationships with their teachers in light of extrinsic attributes such as enjoying a particular project, learning specific concepts, improved skills, or grading outcomes. Students' *superlative expressions* included messages reflecting the students' liking behaviors for the classroom experience and teacher through the use of superlative terms such as "best class ever," "favorite teacher ever," and "most I've ever learned." These messages were also categorized as sycophant messages, as a frequent motive

47. SUSAN FUSSELL & MALLIE MOSS, *Figurative Language in Emotional Communication*, in *SOCIAL AND COGNITIVE APPROACHES TO INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION* 119–21 (S. R. Fussell & R. J. Kreuz eds., 1998).

for superlative messages is students making end-of-semester attempts to score “brownie points” from instructors of record.

To understand further how the initial seven categories related to teachers’ motivations, axial coding was performed to reveal intersections among the codes and categories.⁴⁸ This phase of coding revealed two emergent themes that described how students characterized their relationships with their teachers, and therefore how the teachers viewed their roles in each of the two instructional settings. Specifically, students in traditional educational settings tended to provide feedback reflecting the transactional nature of their relationships with their teachers, while incarcerated students tended to provide feedback reflecting the transformational nature of their relationships with teachers. Table 2 provides exemplars of each of these themes derived from participants’ memorable messages.⁴⁹ The two themes revealed in axial coding demonstrate how incarcerated students provided feedback to teachers in the correctional setting that helped the teacher understand and define his or her role in the correctional setting.

Compared to non-incarcerated students, who tended to view their relationships with teachers as a transaction of services, grades, and course credits, incarcerated students provided messages reflecting the transformative nature of their relationships with teachers. Often, inmates feel unworthy of someone else’s time; both staff and fellow inmates reinforce this feeling.⁵⁰ Additionally, it would not be surprising if many inmates do not have insight as to their own potentialities as students, and thus feel unworthy of an education. Often, problems in school lead to incarceration, whether caused by learning disabilities, family problems, or drug and alcohol abuse, and many of the incarcerated never have the opportunity to explore their individual talents and gifts.⁵¹ The transformative theme of incarcerated students’ messages reflects the intrinsic impact of the educational experience and close relationship with their teachers as students begin to recognize their own unique abilities. The realization that they actually have something to offer the world after the world has been telling them otherwise is not only significant to the inmate, but to the institution in which they are housed, their family, and the public. When a person feels worthy for the first time in their life, they are less likely to behave

48. See CORBIN & STRAUSS, *supra* note 9, at 123 (“Axial coding is the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed axial because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions.” The goal of axial coding is to form more precise and complete explanations of phenomena.)

49. See *infra* Table 2.

50. WINTERFIELD ET AL., *supra* note 10, at 7.

51. See *id.* at 1.

in a manner consistent with having nothing to lose—a transformation in mind and body.⁵²

TABLE 2
MEMORABLE MESSAGE THEMES

<i>Intrinsically-focused Transformational Messages of Incarcerated Students</i>	<i>Extrinsically-focused Transactional Messages of Non-Incarcerated Students</i>
You are like blood in my system.	You're a rockstar!
Thank you for making me human again.	You made this class really fun to learn.
You treat us like real college students.	Instructor blew my mind.
You are saving our lives.	I've never learned so much in one semester.
I have hope.	You really made me think.
I believe in myself again.	Thank you for working with me on my paper.
Thank you for showing us that our ideas matter.	I'm a better writer.
I am a writer.	I look forward to studying with you next semester.
I am a fighter for self-understanding and justice.	Thanks for helping me speak in front of people.
Thank you for sharing your life with us.	You are a demanding teacher.

The relationships formed between incarcerated students and correctional educators are evident in the memorable messages that reflect the intensity of the impact between the incarcerated student and teacher. Intrinsically focused messages reflect not just the impact of the educational experience, but even more significantly, the deeply emotional connection the incarcerated students share with their teachers. These messages contribute to the teachers' motivation to continue teaching in prisons, which results in additional transformative relationships.

52. *Id.* at 6.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the unique relationship of motivation in correctional educators, as grounded in the motivation and educational outcomes of their students, as conveyed through memorable messages. The uniqueness of the relationships formed by those in the correctional environment is the focus of this essay, specifically the transformative nature of the teacher-student relationship. The study begins with the premise that teachers are motivated by students and teachers provide benefits to the environments where they work based on that motivation. Analysis of memorable messages, or the communicative experiences recalled by the teachers, revealed two unique relationships between prison teachers and incarcerated students. Students expressed an ability to reflect on the impact of the educational experience and a gratitude for the teacher that goes far beyond the simple “you’re my favorite teacher” or “this was the best class ever.” Highly emotional messages in the form of metaphor reflect the realization many of these students have in regard to their own abilities to make a valuable contribution to the world. The transformative relationship affects the incarcerated student beyond their sense of self (intrinsic value). Consequently, it is the same transformative nature of student-teacher relationship that impacts the correctional educator beyond their sense of themselves simply as an educator.

In the context of teaching within a prison, the motivation to educate students is not just about recidivism; it is about organizational functioning improved by motivated educators working for little or no pay as *ad hoc* members of the prison staff and the positive ripple effect that carries beyond the prison walls.⁵³ The entire prison experience is based in dehumanization, humiliation by staff and, even more often, fellow inmates, and an abundance of time to meditate on what went wrong.⁵⁴ It is not coincidental that there are regular suicide attempts in prisons.⁵⁵ Prison will strip away someone’s soul.

For students who provided memorable messages to the correctional teachers, their time in the classroom was more than simply learning how to analyze poetry or how to write a paper; it was a life-saving experience. While in prison, the mantra of many inmates is just “do your time, don’t let your time do you.” They live one moment at a time, checking the days off until they go home. Post-secondary correctional education affects students’ views of themselves and the possible roles they can play in the world. The relationships they form with their teachers result in realization of a value beyond mere statistics in the punitive culture of America and a newly formed sense of choice in determining their destinies. In essence, the teacher-student

53. *See id.* at 5.

54. *See id.* at 7.

55. *See* Thomas J. Fagan et al., *Self-Injurious Behavior in Correctional Settings*, 16 J. CORR. HEALTH CARE 48, 50 (2010).

2014]

WHY DO THEY DO IT?

315

relationships formed in correctional classrooms provide inmates with a chance to be free . . . even while on the inside.

