**The Evergreen State College**

**Graduate Program on the Environment**

### Thesis Prospectus

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
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**STUDENT AGREEMENT:**



**SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ DATE** December 6, 2020

**FACULTY READER APPROVAL:**

**SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ DATE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**MES DIRECTOR APPROVAL:**

**SIGNATURE:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ DATE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. Provide the working title of your thesis[[1]](#endnote-1).

Environmental education as a platform for empowerment in a correctional setting and beyond.

1. In 250 words or less, summarize the key background information needed to understand your research problem and question.

The United States currently incarcerates more people than any other country in the world at a staggering rate of 860 per 100,000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). More than two million adults are incarcerated in the United States, and each year more than 700,000 leave federal and state prisons and return to outside communities (Davis et al., 2014). When they leave a highly structured prison environment for the unstructured world, many struggle to navigate and adjust to their new environment due to the stigma and negative public perception of being formerly incarcerated, and the lack of support systems that enable them to pave a path for success – all of which stem from the systemic oppression designed to disempower currently and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Studies involving the topic of in-prison education programs as a goal to reduce recidivism abound (Cooper, Durose, & Snyder, 2014). However, when almost three-quarters of individuals released return to prison, the majority of them within the first year of release, it begs the question as to whether the current in-prison education programs effectively serve their intended purpose to provide opportunities which help improve the future of incarcerated individuals (Cooper, Durose, & Snyder, 2014).

Environmental education is a new and emerging approach to in-prison education that has gone widely unexplored in terms of potential benefits and outcome as a result of participating in such programs. Effective in-prison environmental education can have the potential to be transformative on both individual and organizational level, enabling individuals to exert control and engaging them in decision making for social change (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). By identifying prisons as a marginalized and oppressed community, this thesis aims to first explore what it means to empower people in these communities, then determine how environmental education programs can play a role in fighting against the forces of systemic injustice and breaking the cycle of mass incarceration.

1. State your research question(s).

What does it mean for individuals in marginalized and oppressed communities to be empowered, and what tools are required for empowerment?

Can environmental education empower incarcerated individuals in a correctional setting and beyond? If so, how?

1. Situate your research problem within the relevant literature. What is the theoretical and/or practical framework of your research problem?

Despite WADOC’s commitment to “transform lives for a better Washington”, the current justice system by design ensures that the incarcerated people are and will remain disempowered. The negative impacts of incarceration will also remain with the individuals post-release as many of them are stripped of their rights and abilities to participate in many aspects of social life which could, and often does, lead to reincarceration. Especially considering that more than 700,000 people leave federal and state prisons and return to outside communities each year, we must create effective support systems and outlets in which to help empower incarcerated individuals on individual, organizational, and community levels (Davis et al., 2014).

Because empowerment is context and population specific as stated by Zimmerman (2000), I will use empowerment theory as the main theoretical framework as I investigate how this construct fits into the context of incarcerated populations.

Perkins and Zimmerman (1981) define empowerment as

*A value orientation for working in the community and a theoretical model for understanding the process and consequences of efforts to exert control and influence over decisions that affect one’s life, organizational functioning, and the quality of community life.*

The theory of empowerment includes both the process and the outcome by which people gain greater access to available resources and mastery over their lives (Swift & Levin, 1987; Rappaport, 1984; Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989). Empowering process refers to the action taken to achieve a goal or an outcome. Empowered outcome measures the resulting effect or consequence of people’s attempts to gain greater access to resources, and control over their lives (Zimmerman, 2000). Furthermore, this framework can be viewed as a multi-level approach where empowerment can occur at the individual, organizational, and community levels (Rappaport, 1984; Zimmerman 2000). On all three of these levels of analyses; participation, control, and critical awareness are key aspects that could ultimately lead to empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000).

According to Zimmerman (2000), empowerment on an individual level involves “beliefs about one’s competence, efforts to exert control, and understanding of the socio-political environment”. In other words, empowerment on this level requires individuals to gain critical awareness of their social and political situation so they can identify and cultivate resources they need to achieve a desired outcome or goal (Kieffer, 1984). On the individual level, the empowering process may include examples such as learning decision-making skills and managing resources, while gaining a sense of control and critical awareness are considered empowered outcomes (Zimmerman, 2000).

Empowerment on an organizational level occurs within organizations that undertake the process, and as a result produce an outcome in which members gain control over their lives. The empowering process on this level may include shared responsibility and leadership and collective skill development as a result of collaborative work or action, while empowered outcome may include policy influence or developing of a sense of identity (Zimmerman, 2000).

On a community level, empowerment involves individuals as well as organizations working collaboratively to improve the community by identifying and responding to community needs and threats to quality of life, and providing opportunities for citizen participation (Cottrell, 1983; Zimmerman, 2000). Examples of empowering communities (a process) includes providing access to resources and encouraging diversity and inclusion, while characteristics of empowered communities (an outcome) may include formation of organizational coalitions and outlets for citizen participation (Zimmerman, 2000).

1. Explain the significance of this research problem. Why is this research important? What are the potential contributions of your work? How might your work advance scholarship?

One of every 116 adults in the United States ends up in prison. Of those, about 33% are Black, 23% are Hispanic, and 30% are White, despite the fact that Whites comprise 64% of the population while Blacks and Hispanics make up 12% and 16% respectively (Gramlich 2019). These figures underscore the role that poverty and race play in the current criminal justice system (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). Even before the courts sentence a detained defendant to prison, low-income individuals most likely cannot afford the high price of bail. The median felony bail bond of $10,000 equates to roughly eight months’ income for an average detained defendant (Sawyer & Wagner, 2019). As a result, low-income detainees spend more time in jails and prisons compared to their high-income counterparts. This widens disparities in social and racial classes though accumulating debt, decimating future job opportunities, and increasing risk of physical and mental health, ultimately affecting their resilience and ability to improve their quality of life. Consequently, people of color, who face greater rates of poverty, become significantly overrepresented in the United States prison system (Sawyer & Wagner, 2019). The “justice” system in the United States can be described as a system that locks up low-income individuals, and as a result disproportionately imprisoning people of color and perpetuating an endless cycle of poverty and incarceration.

This research project has the potential to add to various studies conducted on prison education and transformative justice. While many authors have studied in-prison education programs, recidivism, and prison cultures, few have examined environmental education as a means to empower incarcerated people (Castro, 2018, Davis et al., 2014, Maltz, 1984). Furthermore in addition to the literal walls that surround prison facilities, a metaphorical wall exists to make the flow of information between prisons and outside communities difficult. By informing the reader about the ineffective justice system that disempowers incarcerated individuals by often rendering them as unworthy of citizenship and human rights, this project aims to serve as a pipeline to spread awareness to the outside communities in efforts to combat various forces of systemic injustice. This thesis will also aim to serve as a framework for correctional institutions to implement or expand environmental education programs as a viable option to positively contribute to the transformation of the current justice system.

1. Summarize your study design[[2]](#endnote-2). If applicable, identify the key variables in your study. What is their relationship to each other? For example, which variables are you considering as independent (explanatory) and dependent (response)?

Zimmerman (2000) states that the empowering process requires community participants to not only have an active role in implementing the project, but also in setting the agenda. Furthermore, the underlying definition of empowerment as well as the process to achieve it “*must be self-defined by the people of concern, otherwise we undercut by our metacommunications the very essence of empowerment*” (Rappaport, 1984). In this context, the people of concern refers to incarcerated individuals. As such, they must have an active role in influencing the research through input and feedback to ensure the research is being conducted in a way that is effectively empowering.

Taking a similar approach to Bethany Shepler’s (MES 2019) thesis design, I plan to identify and recruit a group of incarcerated thesis advisors to work with to develop a research that accurately portrays the problem and encompasses the need to resolve that issue. By recognizing the power imbalance that exists between those who are incarcerated and those who are not, this process makes an attempt to prevent taking a top-down approach in conducting a research project that involves incarcerated individuals without their true voices being heard. By ‘leveling the playing field’ I am able to ensure inclusivity and conduct accurate and useful research that will not only advance this field of scholarship but also address the issues surrounding our justice system.

To ensure the safety of incarcerated thesis advisors, supporting DOC staff, as well as myself from COVID-19, I tentatively plan to conduct the thesis advisory work remotely. Most communications between the thesis advisors and myself would occur in writing. If circumstances allow for a safe facility visit in the future, I will adhere to all COVID-19 protocols set by TESC, WADOC, and SPP. I also plan to develop an SPP Operational Safety Plan that will be approved by SPP-Evergreen and WADOC prior to starting this work (appendix 1).

Thesis advisors are not considered research subjects, and no data will be collected or used to write this thesis. As this research focuses on environmental education, thesis advising will occur within the context of (or potentially as an extension to) Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) programs. For details regarding permissions required to work with incarcerated thesis advisors, please see question 10 of this prospectus. The list below details the role of thesis advisors and what it does and does not entail:

Thesis advisors **WILL**:

* Provide their perspectives on the empowerment theory from a prison context
* Advise on data organization, analysis, and presentation strategies
* Inform interview question design to most effectively address the research topic
* Be able to withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence; participation is completely voluntary.
* Receive print copies of relevant SPP-curated peer-reviewed journals and articles for educational purposes.
* Have access to the final thesis after the research concludes (~June, 2021).
* Be a part of a graduate-level research project and therefore gain exposure and insight into the thesis process.

Thesis advisors **will NOT**:

* Be considered a research subject.
* Provide any data or interviews to be used in this thesis. (their ideas and comments can influence research design, but will NOT be used as data).
* Be personally identified in the thesis. They will be acknowledged as “thesis advisors”.
* Have access to any raw interview data collected from this research.

Thesis advisory group will consist of Roots of Success (ROS) program instructors or beekeeping students at Stafford Creek Corrections Center (SCCC), Washington Corrections Center (WCC), or Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW). Roots of Success is an environmental literacy curriculum that covers vital environmental topics and issues with an emphasis on community-based solutions. Roots of Success classes are taught by incarcerated instructors who have graduated from the program themselves and have become certified to teach the course.

Once I have a group of individuals who have accepted the invitation to serve as thesis advisors, I will propose a research design and make adjustments according to their feedback. Few vital information to consider that require input from thesis advisors include:

* Defining empowerment in the prison context
* How to analyze, organize, and present data
* What interview questions best capture the information we need to analyze the data and most effectively address the research topic and question(s)?
	+ How do we prevent survey takers from potentially skewing the data by trying too hard to please the researcher?
	+ Work with thesis advisors to come up with properly worded questions.

 In this thesis I am to determine if and how environmental education programs can lead to empowerment of incarcerated individuals by applying the themes identified through semi-structured interviews of formerly incarcerated individuals to the theoretical framework of empowerment. By identifying themes and determining how they fit into each level of analysis within the empowerment construct (individual, organizational, and community), it is possible to determine what leads to empowerment in a correctional setting through environmental education programs.

The goals of the interview are to:

* + 1. Explore the participant’s experience in environmental educational program(s) on an individual level of analysis within the empowerment construct, and its impacts (processes and outcomes during and after incarceration) to gain a sense of empowerment within the intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral context.
		2. Explore the participants experience in environmental educational programs on an organizational level of analysis within the empowerment construct, and its impacts (process and outcomes during and after incarceration) to gain a sense of empowerment within, but not limited to, the following characteristics:
* A culture of growth and community building
* Opportunities for members to take on meaningful roles
* Peer-based support system that helps members develop a social identity
* Shared leadership and decision-making power
	+ 1. Explore the participants experience in environmental educational programs on a community level of analysis within the empowerment construct, and its impacts (processes and outcomes, during and after incarceration) to gain a sense of empowerment within, but not limited to, the following realms:
* Initiation of efforts to improve the community
* Responds to threats to quality of life
* Provides opportunities for citizen participation
1. Describe the data that will be the foundation of your thesis. Will you use existing data, or gather new data (or both)? Describe the process of acquiring or collecting data[[3]](#endnote-3).

 I plan to obtain my data by conducting semi-structured interviews, via Zoom, with 5-8 formerly incarcerated people who have previously participated in in-prison environmental education programs. Interviewees will consist of formerly incarcerated individuals who are currently not under any DOC supervision—for example, they are not on parole. This will allow me to work only with the Evergreen Human Subject Review board rather than with the DOC. Furthermore, interviewees can be freer and more candid in their response and opinions.

Prior to conducting interviews, participants will be asked to complete an optional and anonymous demographic survey to gain a better understanding of the survey population. Survey questions will attempt to capture each participant’s release date, age, race, preferred pronoun, and the educational program in which they were involved.

Interviewees will be recruited through existing contacts through SPP. SPP maintains a contact list of former program participants who have given consent to being contacted post-release. Even if individuals on the list do not meet the requirements to be interviewed, they may also have additional contacts for people who do meet the requirements and may be interested in participating.

Interviews will be conducted using Zoom and will not exceed 60 minutes. There will be 5-10 interview questions in addition to four or five clarifying question under each of the main questions to help guide the conversation. All interview questions, including the follow up questions, will be shared with the participants prior to the interview to ensure that they are able to prepare and feel comfortable with answering the questions. This will also provide the opportunity for them to skip certain questions or withdraw from the study altogether if desired or necessary.

1. Summarize your methods of data analysis. If applicable, discuss specific techniques that you will use to understand the relationships between variables (e.g., interview coding, cost-benefit analysis, specific statistical analyses, spatial analysis) and the steps and tools (e.g., lab equipment, software) that you will take to complete your analyses.

**Demographic surveys**

Information obtained from the demographic survey will be presented in a table to provide a demographic overview of the participants without presenting any identifying information.

**Interviews**

All interviews will be recorded using the recording function on Zoom. Immediately after the interview, I plan to take notes to capture my thoughts and impressions of the interview. After the recorded interviews are transcribed by ear, I will use Atlast.ti to conduct a qualitative analysis to abstract any themes.

1. Address the ethical issues[[4]](#endnote-4) raised by your thesis work. Include issues such as risks to anyone involved in the research, as well as specific people or groups that might benefit from or be harmed by your thesis work, perhaps depending on your results. List any specific reviews you must complete first (e.g., Human Subjects Review or Animal Use Protocol Form).

Set protocols must be followed to conduct research that involves a vulnerable population, especially when gathering new data for a thesis involving formerly incarcerated individuals. This thesis project will need to go through a Human Subjects Review to obtain research and data collection approval. Any and all participation in this research project is completely voluntary, and I will ensure that all participants know the full scope of the research topic as well as the process and goals of the project so that they have a clear understanding of their role and extent of participation. I will also make clear their right to refuse or withdraw from participating in this project at any time, at their own discretion, without disclosing any reason for doing so. While unlikely, in case a participant feels that their rights are being violated for any reason or they feel uncomfortable at any point, I will have a reporting system with contacts for further support in which they can address any issues or concerns. All participants will be made aware of these principles through a consent form that they will be required to read and electronically sign prior to participating in the research. In regards to confidentiality, all participants will be informed, prior to participation, of what information that they provide will be disclosed and utilized for data analysis. Any recordings of conducted interviews will be deleted immediately after being transcribed. Interview transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected computer in which only the researcher will have access to. Any identifying information will be kept in a file separate from the transcripts.

When working with formerly incarcerated individuals, the researcher must acknowledge and consider the power dynamics that exist between the researcher and the research subject. In this case, I, the researcher, will have personal gains from doing this work as it will ultimately lead to a graduate degree and personal advancement in the field of academia. To shifting the power dynamic that exist between the researcher and the interviewee, I will make clear that the interviewees are the expert teachers, providing vital information to help shed more light on racial and social injustices surrounding the current justice system, and to promote effective education in corrections in a way that empowers incarcerated individuals for social change. Redefining the relationship into which the interviewees teach the researcher, not only serves to flip the researcher-interviewee power dynamic into a student-teacher relationship, but also allows them to be in control of the situation.

Upon release, incarceration not only negatively affects an individual’s self-esteem and how the society perceive them as a member of the community, but also dims their economic prospect. A comprehensive report on the effects of incarceration on economic mobility by the Pew Charitable Trusts (2010) found that incarceration reduces hourly wages for men by approximately 11 percent and annual earnings by 40 percent. Furthermore, a formerly incarcerated individual on average will have earned $179,000 less than if they had never been incarcerated. Therefore, one ethical concern with attempting to collect data from formerly incarcerated individuals is with academia and researchers, often employed and receiving a fair wage, exploiting low wage work of people who may be on the other end of the wage spectrum (Samuel, 2018). To ensure that all research participants receive fair compensation, interview participants will be paid $100 for their time to sit in an interview that will not exceed 90 minutes.

While incarcerated thesis advisors are not research subjects, and no data will be collected through my work with them, they play an important role in providing valuable input and expertise, helping to shape the thesis project. As currently incarcerated thesis advisors cannot receive direct monetary compensation, I plan to donate $250 to their program that they facilitate (Roots of Success and composting programs) so they can work with their DOC staff liaisons to purchase educational materials for their class. Ultimately, I argue that by ensuring the work of all research participants considered a vulnerable population are not exploited and that their input has value, conducting this research is justified because the benefits far outweigh the potential risks.

***Draft interview consent form***

Environmental education as a platform for empowerment in a correctional setting and beyond Consent instrument adapted from *Public Views of Wave Energy* project by Dr. Boudet and Dr. Hazboun

You are being invited to participate in a research interview titled “environmental education as a platform for empowerment in a correctional setting and beyond” conducted by Shohei Morita, a graduate student at the Evergreen State College. As a part of the thesis requirements for the Master of Environmental Studies program at the Evergreen State College, this interview attempts gain a better understanding of potential benefits of in-prison environmental education programs as a means to empower currently and formerly incarcerated individuals. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured remote (Zoom) interview that will last between 60-90 minutes. This survey will ask a variety of questions regarding your personal experience, opinions, and perceptions of participating in an in-prison environmental education program.

You will be compensated through an honorarium of $100. Data obtained from this survey has the potential to contribute to research in promoting environmental education as a viable option in prison programming, as well as the preferred alternative to traditional in-prison programs in terms of instilling a sense of power for social change in incarcerated individuals within correctional settings and beyond.

Risks to you are minimal and are likely to be no more than mild discomfort with sharing your opinion. To the best of our ability, your answers in this study will remain confidential. With any online-related activity, however, the risk of a breach of confidentiality is always possible. Additional information about Zoom’s privacy policy can be found here: https://blog.zoom.us/zoom-privacy-policy/. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of compensation. You have complete control of what information you share with the interviewee, and are free to decline to answer any questions. All Zoom interviews will be recorded. Any recordings of conducted interviews will be deleted immediately after being transcribed. Interview transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected computer in which only the researcher will have access to. Data collected from this survey will be analyzed and included in the final thesis paper, and shared at the thesis presentation. Any personally identifying information will be stored separately from any transcripts, and will be removed before it is shared in any way. After the research concludes, all transcripts will be uploaded to Google Drive using a password protected account and will be stored for 3 years, at which point they will be permanently deleted. You can request an electronic copy of your transcript at any time until it is permanently deleted by emailing Shohei Morita at the email below. Final thesis will be made available to view and download on the Evergreen State College’s MES thesis archive page (insert link).

If you have questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the researcher, Shohei Morita at (707) 407-5642 or morsho12@evergreen.edu. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, or you experience problems as a result of participating in this research project, you may contact The Evergreen State College’s Human Subjects Research Committee with any concerns that you have about your rights or welfare as a study participant. This office can be reached by email at IRB@evergreen.edu.

**By clicking “I agree” below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in this research study. Please print a copy of this page for your records.**

1. List specific research permits[[5]](#endnote-5) or permissions you need to obtain before you begin collecting data (e.g. landowner permissions, agency permits).

I will require a general permission from SPP to conduct this research project (already obtained). In regards to working with thesis advisors, it is within the context of SPP’s Roots of Success program and the partner agreement between SPP-Evergreen and SPP-DOC, so a state-wide WADOC approval will not be required. However, I will need to obtain permission from the Superintendent of the facility where the thesis advisors are currently housed. Request for permission from the Superintendent will be sent by the SPP Co-Director, Kelli Bush. Please see appendix 2 and 3 for sample letters.

1. Reflect on how your positionality as a researcher could affect your results and how you will account for this in the research process[[6]](#endnote-6).

In addition to the power differentials that may typically arise due to the roles of researcher and research subjects addressed in question 9, there are other factors that may influence this relationship dynamic such as age, race, gender, education level, and previous work experience. Similar to how dominant personalities among faculties can potentially set the tone and agenda of an academic curriculum as stated by Francis et al. (2018), personality traits, often influenced by the aforementioned factors, may lead to a researcher-dominated interview process and research design which contradict with the very essence of empowerment. Noting these factors that could influence the relationship dynamic between the researcher and the research subject, deliberate efforts to eliminate power differentials must be made by ensuring that the researcher first identifies any potential contributing factors specific to each interviewee, then actively and deliberately ensure that the researcher refrains from taking a dominating position.

It is important to note that I, as the researcher, have never been incarcerated. While working with incarcerated individuals and corrections staff at SPP has given me an insight into the structure of prisons and a better understanding of various issues surrounding our justice system, it is imperative that I collaborate with and receive input from those who are or have been incarcerated to ensure we approach this research in an inclusive manner.

Some level of biases are expected in this type of qualitative research. Because I am working for SPP while simultaneously conducting this research, interviewees (former SPP program participants) may be reluctant to share certain opinions or may answer questions to “please the researcher” which could skew the data. To account for this potential bias, personally identifying information will not be shared or used.

1. Provide at least a rough estimate of the costs associated with conducting your research.  Provide details about each budget item so that the breakdown of the final cost is clear.

SPP granted a thesis funding of $1,500. Tentatively, I plan to utilize this funding to cover the following costs.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Notes | Subtotal |
| Honoraria for interview participants | Each participant will receive $100 | $800 |
| Monetary donation to program(s) which thesis advisors are a part of.  | To be paid as a form of donation to purchase class room supplies and educational materials for the program(s) that thesis advisors teach/facilitate.  | $300 |
| Transportation to and from prison where thesis advisors are housed | To be reimbursed at $0.58 per mile, not to exceed $125. Any additional transportation costs incurred will be paid out of pocket.  | $125 |
| Thesis printing | 5 copies (one for SPP and four copies to be distributed to DOC staff liaison(s) and thesis advisors) at $55 per book. If additional copies need to be printed, it will be paid out of pocket.  | $275 |
| **TOTAL →** | **$1,500** |

1. Provide a detailed working outline of your thesis.

**Introduction**

* General and broad background information on:
	+ the history and;
	+ current status of incarceration and the justice system in the United States.
* Brief overview of benefits of environmental education
* Tying incarceration and environmental education together
	+ A quick paragraph on empowerment
	+ Present research questions

**Literature Review**

* Part 1: Incarceration
	+ Social class disparity and institutional racism
	+ Prison education programs and reduced recidivism
* Part 2: Empowerment theory
	+ Theoretical framework overview
	+ Empowerment process and outcome at an individual level
	+ Empowerment process and outcome at an organizational level
	+ Empowerment process and outcome at a community level
* Part 3: Benefits of exposure to and interaction with nature and living organisms
	+ Positive effect on mental processes
	+ Positive effect on physical function and/or physical health
	+ Positive effect on cognitive ability or function
	+ Positive social effect at an individual or community scale
	+ Positive effect on spiritual well-being
* Part 4: Environmental racism and the exclusion of oppressed and marginalized individuals and communities in environmental movements
	+ Environmental racism overview
	+ Exclusion of oppressed and marginalized communities in conversations on climate change
	+ Access to environmental policy
	+ Access to nature
* Part 5: In-prison environmental education
	+ SPP overview
	+ Peer-led programs
	+ Community expert-supported certification programs
	+ Conservation programs
* Conclude literature review and transition to methods

**Methods**

* Main goal/objective of this research
* Present research questions (again)
* Research approval
	+ Thesis advisors
	+ Formerly incarcerated interviewees
* Participants
* Demographic surveys
	+ Overview and methods
	+ Results of demographic surveys
* Interviews
	+ Interview process
	+ Interview goals
	+ Methods for data analysis

**Results and Discussion**

* Present themes found from the interviews and under each theme discuss how they relate to the empowerment process and outcome (theoretical framework) at individual, organizational, and community levels.

**Limitations and suggestions for future research**

* To be informed by results obtained from interviews

**Conclusion**

* To be informed by results obtained from interviews

**References**

* Zotero

**Appendices**

* Interview questions
* Demographic surveys
1. Provide a specific work plan and a timeline for each of the major tasks in the work plan. Be as realistic as you can, even though you will probably need to alter this schedule as you complete the tasks. Remember that faculty readers take time to return your drafts and that the final polishing and formatting of your thesis for binding will take longer than you ever imagined.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Week | Task | Due Date |
| 11/9/20 | Draft and send letter to facility requesting permission to work with thesis advisors | 11/13/20 |
| 11/16/20 | Draft invitation email to potential interviewees | 11/20/20 |
| 11/23/20 | Buffer week and work on HSR application |  |
| 11/30/20 | Complete final prospectus | 12/3/20 |
| 12/7/20 | Submit signed prospectus | 12/11/20 |
| Identify and send letter(s) to potential thesis advisors asking if they want to participate | 12/11/20 (or whenever facility approval is granted) |
| 12/14/20 | Complete introduction | 12/18/20 |
| 12/21/20 | Submit Human Subjects Review application | 12/23/20 |
| 12/28/20 | Complete Literature Review | 12/31/20 |
| 1/4/21 | Identify and send invitation email to potential interviewees (repeat until at least 5 individuals are identified) | 1/8/21 (or whenever HSR is approved) |
| 1/11/21 | Draft methods complete (work with thesis advisors starts) | 1/16/21 |
| 1/18/21 | Buffer week (work with thesis advisors as necessary) |  |
| 1/25/21 | Have a minimum of 5 interviewees selected for interviews.  | 1/31/21 |
| 2/1/21 | Methods complete (interviews start – or whenever HSR review process is complete) | 2/1/21 |
| 2/8/21 | Interview 1, 2, and 3 plus transcribe | 2/14/21 |
| 2/15/21 | Interview 4, 5, and 6 plus transcribe | 2/21/21 |
| 2/22/21 | Interview 7 and 8 plus transcribe | 2/28/21 |
| 3/1/21 | Buffer week and start data analysis |  |
| 3/8/21 | Data analysis | 3/14/21 |
| 3/15/21 | Write up results (individual and organizational) | 3/21/21 |
| 3/22/21 | Write up results (organizational and community) | 3/28/21 |
| 3/29/21 | Write up discussion and conclusion | 4/4/21 |
| 4/5/21 | Complete draft to reader | 4/10/21 |
| 4/12/21 | Revisions and prepare presentation |  |
| 4/19/21 | Revisions and prepare presentation |  |
| 4/26/21 | Revisions and prepare presentation |  |
| 5/3/21 | Revisions and prepare presentation |  |
| 5/10/21 | Revisions and prepare presentation |  |
| 5/17/21 | Revisions and prepare presentation |  |
| 5/24/21 | Thesis presentation | 5/28/21 |
| Final thesis to Reader | 5/29/21 |
| 5/31/21 | Final thesis to MES Director | 6/5/21 |
| 6/7/21 | Present thesis to incarcerated thesis advisors |  |

1. Who, beyond your MES faculty reader, will support your thesis? Indicate support both within and outside of Evergreen. Be specific about who they are and in what capacity they will support your thesis. If you are working with an outside agency or expert, be specific about their expectations for your data analysis or publication of results.

**Kelli Bush, SPP Co-Director**

Kelli is my supervisor at SPP and she will be providing support and input to help guide me in the right direction. She will also assist in identifying and contacting potential interviewees as well as sending requests to prison facilities to request permission to work with thesis advisors.

**Emily Passarelli, Garrett Heyns Education Center (Washington Corrections Center) Program Manager**

Emily is a former MES graduate and current works at Washington Corrections Center. Using her expertise from her line of work as well as her experience with conducting research during MES, she will also help provide guidance and support as necessary.

**DOC staff liaison**

This refers to a DOC staff who currently acts as the liaison for the SPP program(s) which incarcerated thesis advisors are a part of. They will help coordinate any communications and meetings (COVID protocols permitting) with thesis advisors.

**Thesis advisors**

Thesis advisors will help inform the research method and techniques by providing input and feedback. Please refer to question 6 for detailed roles of thesis advisors.

**Formerly incarcerated interviewees**

Five to eight formerly incarcerated SPP program participants will be selected for an interview. Transcriptions of the interviews will serve as the primary data for analysis.

1. **List the 3-5 most important references you have used to identify the specific questions and context of your topic, help with issues of research design and analysis, and/or provide a basis for interpretation. For each annotated reference, explain how your project specifically connects to the source by extending, challenging, or responding to the conclusions, methods, or implications. For any other sources cited in this document provide a complete bibliographic citation.**

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**Appendix 1: Draft SPP COVID-19 Operational Safety Plan**

**SPP Operational Plan Checklist 2020; MES Thesis Advisory Work**

Health & safety are top priority over program operation. The following plan must be agreed upon by all partners including incarcerated techs/students/educators, Corrections and SPP staff and any visiting program partners. Programs may be suspended or discontinued if the plan can’t reasonably be implemented/supported, circumstances change, or partners no longer feel safe operating the program. Individual participants may decide to opt out of program participation or individual activities based on compliance with the plan and/or personal circumstances and perceived risk.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Operational Plan Tasks | WADOC Facility Operations | SPP Program  | Action Items with personnel responsible and complete date |
| Designate Site COVID-19 Supervisor | Designate SPP and WADOC COVID Supervisor (and Liaison(s) as needed)  | SPP Lead: Shohei Morita, GT Programs Coord.  Shohei.morita1@evergreen.edu (707) 407-5642SPP Backup: Kelli Bush, SPP Co-Director, bushk@evergreen.edu; (303)-895-7998WADOC Lead: [Add liaison name here] | Contact WADOC lead/liaison and receive feedback.  |
| Clearly define on-site work to be performed or services provided and those services that are best performed remotely | -Quality check of living organism-Program specific education & training-Educational presentations requiring SPP staff-Program planning/partner check-ins | SPP staff will work with predetermined incarcerated thesis advisors on writing an MES thesis | Staff liaison and facilitator(s) to implement all safety measures when work is in progress.  |
| Program operation in response to COVID:  | - All SPP & WADOC staff health check prior to entering facility or program area- SPP significantly reducing visits, & carefully reviewing all risk factors prior to visit - Only offering program socially distanced in program area- All techs, WADOC and SPP staff, & any program visitors must wear masks in program area  | Communications between SPP-Evergreen staff and incarcerated thesis advisor will occur in writing. In person facility visits for SPP-Evergreen staff and other yellow badge holders will be prohibited unless circumstances allow for a safe visit in the future. May utilize technology (Zoom, Skype, etc) for remote communication if resources allow and are given permission by facility leadership. Sharing of supplies and materials (ie: pens, notebooks, manuals) not permitted.  | SPP-Evergreen staff to work with program liaison to ensure the program can be operated safely.   |
| On-going, routine, training and review of Operational Safety Plan by WADOC administration and staff, SPP staff and incarcerated participants. | - Propose plan and procedure updates in response to changing circumstances- Follow new WADOC requirements and document in updated plan as needed  | All incarcerated program participants receive SPP COVID letter, SPP Operational Plan, CDC COVID educational handout, | SPP-Evergreen to make all documents available on Box.comWADOC liaison will print and distribute contents to all incarcerated program participants.  |
| Symptom monitoring and personal care for employees and site visitors (in accordance with requirements from Evergreen and WADOC). | - Negative responses to all health questionnaire inquiries - Temperature check (<100.4)- SPP Coordinator & Supervisor consider & discuss recent travel & potential exposure circumstances prior to visit to determine risk; always error on the side of caution; reschedule or propose to substitute another yellow badge staff to cover visit as needed | - Symptom monitoring for all program participants to be conducted in accordance with WADOC requirements. - If/when making facility visits, SPP-Evergreen staff will follow all TESC and WADOC guidelines and protocols.  | WADOC staff receiving weekly COVID testingSPP-Evergreen staff will receive COVID testing prior to entering a facility.  |
| On-site social distancing and site analysis to reduce COVID-19 exposure by employees  | -Physical separation of at least 6 feet between all persons at all times- Plan training in open, outdoor spaces- Identify/minimize work flow and choke points- Create a work area schedule to reduce interactions and create reliability in staffing numbers- Be aware/respectful of personal space | - If/when making facility visits, contact among incarcerated participants and SPP staff performed outside if possible with social distancing. - When work needs to be held indoors, utilize large, open space with proper ventilation where all participants can maintain physical separation of 6 ft between all persons at all times. - Not to exceed 10 participants including DOC staff- Identify choke points  | Identify and select location where social distancing is possible at all times prior to each meeting. For SPP-Evergreen staff visits, visiting staff will give a reminder to all participants at the start of the meeting, class, graduation, etc.  |
| PPE utilization  | - Check PPE equipment and use by each person | All participants will utilize PPE during the event. DOC liaison will monitor the use of PPE equipment at all times. | Confirm with liaison/site supervisor to ensure all participants have access to PPE. |
| Sanitation and site decontamination procedures | - Emphasize regular hand washing with soap and water - SPP staff and visitors use small personal hand sanitizer before and after visit and in-between touching surfaces  | Program participants and liaison will sanitize high-touch areas frequently.  | Make sanitation materials available. |
| A copy of the Operational Plan available on each job site during any activities. Post safety and COVID-19 signage | Operational Plan review, approval and update by SPP and WADOC COVID leads | A copy of the Operational Plan will be made available on Box. If/when making facility visits, SPP-staff or WADOC liaison will make a hardcopy available in the classroom. | Program liaison to print and make available the Operational Plan document for the group. |
| Post Exposure Response | - Log all visits at Public entrance- SPP: maintain log of all site visits in personal notebook, include visitors- SPP: track program participants and respective living units-WA DOC inform SPP staff of any exposure to confirmed COVID positive staff or technicians or of any active quarantines in living units which house technicians or facility-wide quarantine | - Discuss plan for potential quarantines- Make sure SPP-Evergreen staff are contacted in case of unit or facility-wide quarantine- Only predetermined individuals will participate. SPP-Evergreen and WADOC will have a list of all participants. | SPP staff share program contact list and ask appropriate way to ensure shared with Shift Command to receive notification in case of quarantine SPP-Evergreen and DOC staff/site supervisor to maintain participants list. |

**Appendix 2**: Sample letter to the facility Superintendent requesting permission to work with incarcerated thesis advisors

Dear X,

I am writing to you with a request on behalf of Shohei Morita, SPP Green Track Programs Coordinator who is conducting graduate research on environmental education in prisons. He would like your permission to work with incarcerated individuals who currently participate in the SPP beekeeping program to serve as “thesis advisors” to help inform his research design. Multiple SPP graduate students have successfully included currently incarcerated people as advisors or contributors to their thesis research and it seems to be a mutually beneficial model. Please note that Shohei will not be collecting any data or conducting any interviews with currently incarcerated people; their interactions will be limited to advising.

Please see his proposal posted below with more information. Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to hearing from you and please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Kelli Bush

SPP Co-Director

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My name is Shohei Morita, and I am a graduate student at the Evergreen State College pursuing a degree in Masters of Environmental Studies (MES). As a partial fulfillment for the MES degree, I am collaborating with SPP to conduct thesis research on in-prison environmental education programs. I am investigating how in-prison environmental education programs can contribute to the empowerment of incarcerated individuals. Thesis data will be obtained from existing literature and interviews with *formerly* incarcerated individuals (released and not under DOC supervision) who have participated in SPP programs in the past. No data will be collected from *currently* incarcerated people.

The theory of empowerment suggests that the people benefit from having an active role and ability to set the agenda in the change process. As such, I am writing to inquire about the possibility of inviting three to five currently incarcerated individuals to serve as thesis advisors at (INSERT FACILITY NAME). With your approval, I would work with SPP liaison (INSERT NAME AND POSITION OF DOC STAFF), or other approved staff, to offer this advising opportunity to incarcerated individuals currently participating in the SPP Beekeeping, Roots of Success, and/or Gardening programs. Their main role will be to provide input and feedback on various aspects of my thesis research design.

 Thesis advisors are not research subjects, and no data will be collected from them to write the thesis. As this research focuses on environmental education, thesis advising will occur within the context of (or potentially as an extension to) SPP programs. To clearly define the role of a thesis advisor, please see the list below for what this role does and does not entail:

Thesis advisors **WILL**:

* Provide their perspectives on the empowerment theory from a prison context
* Advise on data organization, analysis, and presentation strategies
* Inform interview question design to most effectively address the research topic
* Be able to withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence; participation is completely voluntary.
* Receive print copies of relevant SPP-curated peer-reviewed journals and articles for educational purposes.
* Have access to the final thesis after the research concludes (~June, 2021).
* Be a part of a graduate-level research project and therefore gain exposure and insight into the thesis process.

Thesis advisors **will NOT**:

* Be considered a research subject.
* Provide any data or interviews to be used in this thesis. (their ideas and comments can influence research design, but will NOT be used as data).
* Conduct any research of their own
* Be personally identified in the thesis. They will be acknowledged as “thesis advisors”.
* Have access to any raw interview data collected from this research.
* Communicate with the researcher (in person or in writing) without the involvement of and prior approval from SPP liaison (LIAISON NAME) or other DOC approved staff.

Like DOC, SPP takes COVID-19 very seriously. Our top priority is the health and safety of all incarcerated individuals and corrections staff. While I have a yellow badge allowing me to make facility visits with your permission, I will primarily rely on written communication facilitated by (LIAISON NAME) or other designated Corrections staff. Copies of all communications with thesis advisors will be available for review. If circumstances allow for any in-person visits in the future, I will follow all COVID-19 protocols and will limit my interactions to one or two visits. If we are able to obtain your approval to work with incarcerated thesis advisors, I will also develop a COVID-19 safety plan prior to starting this work.

Thank you for considering this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Kelli Bush, if you have any questions or need additional information regarding my research.

Shohei Morita

SPP Green Track Programs Coordinator & MES student

**Appendix 3:** Sample invitation letter to potential incarcerated thesis advisors

Dear X,

My name is Shohei Morita, and I am a graduate student at the Evergreen State College pursuing a degree in Masters of Environmental Studies (MES). As a partial fulfillment for the MES degree, I am collaborating with SPP to conduct a thesis research on in-prison environmental education programs. I am investigating how in-prison environmental education programs can contribute to the empowerment of incarcerated individuals.

The theory of empowerment suggests that the people benefit from having an active role and ability to set the agenda in the change process. As such, I am writing to invite you to serve on the thesis advisory panel to provide input and feedback on various aspects of my thesis research design. Given your extensive experience in participating in and facilitating environmental education programs, I would be honored to have you be a part of this project as a thesis advisor.

As this research focuses on environmental education, thesis advising will occur within the context of (or potentially as an extension to) SPP programs. Furthermore, thesis advisors are not research subjects, and no data will be collected from you to write the thesis (your ideas and comments can influence research design, but will NOT be used as data). The list below details the role of thesis advisors.

Thesis advisors will:

* Provide their perspectives on the empowerment theory from a prison context
* Advise on data organization, analysis, and presentation strategies
* Inform interview question design to most effectively address the research topic
* Be able to withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence; participation is completely voluntary.
* Receive print copies of relevant SPP-curated peer-reviewed journals and articles for educational purposes.
* Have access to the final thesis after the research concludes (~June, 2021).
* Be a part of a graduate-level research project and therefore gain exposure and insight into the thesis process.
* **NOT** be personally identified in the thesis. You will be acknowledged as “thesis advisors”.

To protect the health and safety of incarcerated individuals, DOC staff, and myself from COVID-19, I plan to conduct most communications with thesis advisors via mail facilitated by (INSERT LIAISON NAME HERE) or other designated Corrections staff. If circumstances allow for a safe facility visit in the future, we may be able to meet in person.

Thank you for considering this request. You can contact me anytime through our SPP liaison (INSERT NAME HERE). We look forward to hearing from you and please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Shohei Morita

SPP Green Track Programs Coordinator & MES student

1. You are not locked into this title; its purpose is to help you identify the main point or topic of your thesis at an early stage. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. You might discuss selection of case studies, sampling methods, experimental design, and/or specific hypotheses you will test. You should also address any specialized knowledge or skills that are necessary to complete the research. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. If you are planning to use existing data, explain the specific source, contact information, arrangement with collaborating agencies, and expectations about use of data and final products of your research. If you are planning to gather new data, describe specific methods, time, place, and equipment that will be required. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. If you’re not sure where to start, consult a ‘Code of Ethics’ or other similar document from an academic society in an applicable field of study. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. If you are collecting ANY samples or data, even observational data, on public lands (city, county, state and/or federal) it is your responsibility to find out the permit requirements BEFORE you collect data. Conducting research with tribal members/on tribal lands will have different and additional requirements. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Your *positionality as a researcher* refers to the fact that one’s “…beliefs, values systems, and moral stances are as fundamentally present and inseparable from the research process as [one]’s physical, virtual, or metaphorical presence when facilitating, participating and/or leading the research project…” (The Weingarten Blog 2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)