

# THESIS

## TRAINING AT COLORADO COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS CENTERS: UNDERSTANDING AND EVALUATING VARIED TRAINING APPROACHES IN THE CORRECTIONS ENVIRONMENT

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## ABSTRACT

### TRAINING AT COLORADO COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS CENTER: UNDERSTANDING AND EVALUATING VARIED TRAINING APPROACHES IN THE CORRECTIONS ENVIRONMENT

Most depictions of the justice system suggest an environment that is strictly punitive. However, Community Corrections, as the last step before individuals reenter their community, is uniquely situated to be responsible for building agency in and actively communicating with those who have been incarcerated. This approach requires staff to be trained differently than others in the Corrections ecosystem so that they might interact with clients in a different, more humanitarian way. The current research aims to examine existing training for Community Corrections employees using the lens of Activity Theory (Engestrom, Vygotsky) and Design Justice (Costanza-Chock, Design Justice Network). To conduct this analysis, in an IRB-approved study, 24 participants, all of whom are practitioners of training or maintain some official role in the training ecosystem, were recruited from nine Community Corrections facilities across the state of Colorado and asked about their experiences with Community Corrections training. After the interviews were conducted, a critical content analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews was done, examining how the current training aligns with the six components of Activity Theory and the ten principles of Design Justice. In doing so, Activity Theory illuminates the complex and rapidly changing Community Corrections environment that staff are being trained in, while alignment with Design Justice principles helps measure the relative success of training. This project found that Community Corrections practitioners are aware of and, to some

degree, are effective in applying Design Justice principles to their work even as structural challenges impede full effectiveness. However, current Design Justice principles did not fully capture the complexity of the institution. Activity Theory additionally revealed the complexity of Community Corrections organizationally and further amplified the need for structural changes that might influence overall effectiveness. This study shows that, moving forward, both Community Corrections itself and Design Justice principles can grow and improve.

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. *Community Corrections:* Community Corrections provides a sentencing alternative, in lieu of prison incarceration, for felony offenders, particularly those who are convicted of any crime punishable by a year or more in prison. These facilities provide a structured environment where participants live under supervision, but do attend work, receive treatment for any mental health needs, and have frequent visitation with family and friends (The City of Denver).
2. *Client:* The word client has recently replaced the word offender, a person convicted of committing a crime or offense (Wex Definitions Team). The word client carries the same definition as offender, but does not dehumanize the individual in the same way the word offender does (The Fortune Society)
3. *Administrator:* The program administrator includes all directors of Community Corrections. These individuals must have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree in social or behavioral sciences, criminal justice, business or public administration, and four years of related experience to include supervisory or management responsibilities. They oversee the implementation and maintenance of the facility, as well as oversee the progress of each client at Community Corrections (The State of Colorado).
4. *Case Management:* Case management is one of the departments under the umbrella of Community Corrections. A case manager's role is to guide a client through their time at Community Corrections. They do so by "coordinat[ing] programming based on inmate needs, determin[ing] earned time grants, develop[ing] parole plans, develop[ing] community corrections referrals, and develop[ing] ISP-I referrals (Colorado Department of Corrections).

5. *Community Corrections Specialists*: Formerly known as security staff, Community Corrections Specialists guide “clients toward pro-social behavior and protects the safety of the staff, clients and community at large through monitoring and enforcing policies, rules and regulations with residential, non-residential and out client services clients.” (ICCS Boulder Job Posting)
6. *Title 17*: Title 17 is located within the Colorado Revised Statutes and contains the rules that must be followed by all Corrections facilities.
7. *Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)*: Put in action in 2003, PREA is a set of guidelines that all types of correctional facilities must follow that aim at eliminating all acts of prison rape. These rules work in conjunction with Title 17 statutes (“Prison Rape Elimination Act.”).
8. *Professional Development*: Professional development is defined as “gaining new skills through continuing education and career training after entering the workforce.” Examples of professional development include taking classes or workshops, attending professional or industry conferences, or earning a certificate to expand your knowledge in your chosen field (Parsons).
9. *Intercept*: The word intercept is featured in the Sequential Intercept Model. Here, intercept are the points at which standard processing of crimes can be intervened with community-based actions. (“Sequential Intercept Model”)
10. *Recidivism*: This term is “measured by criminal acts that resulted in rearrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the person's release” (“Recidivism.”). The goal of Community Corrections is to reduce recidivism.



11. *Justice-involved Individual*: This term, like the word client, has recently been used to refer to any persons who have experience in the justice world. It is often used in replacement of words like ‘convict’ or ‘criminal’ in hopes of placing the person first (Changing the Narrative).

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

In the fall of 2021, I began my work with the Community Literacy Center (CLC) at Colorado State University, under the direction of Professor Tobi Jacobi and Mary Ellen Sanger, the Associate Director of the Community Literacy Center. While I was frankly unsure what my internship would look like under the CLC, I knew that their mission spoke to my professional and personal goals:

The primary mission of the Community Literacy Center is to create and facilitate literacy opportunities that invite community members—particularly people experiencing confinement or in recovery—to engage in innovative and supportive writing spaces and to value the writing and art that emerges through conversation and circulation. (CLC Website)

My first placement during my internship was with the Turning Point Center in Fort Collins, which, at the time, served as a residential facility for young adults struggling with substance abuse, behavior or mental health issues in Northern Colorado. My role was essentially to come to Turning Point once a week and facilitate a writing group that spoke to the needs and desires of the group. Oftentimes, it would be only four or five adolescent girls, but during those writing groups I formed a strong connection with these participants. I witnessed many aspects of their day-to-day life and some of the struggles of being a justice-involved individual, the current term for a person currently or previously involved with the justice system in any way (“Words Matter: Using Humanizing Language”). During this period, I also learned that I am passionate

about the process of reentry into unsupervised society after facing confinement. This year-long internship allowed me to reconceptualize my idea of community and began to suggest how the seemingly simple act of writing can alter individuals and communities. For example, I remember our first workshop at Turning Point. I found myself surprised that so many of these young women wrote pages and pages that expressed so much of themselves, and yet when it came time to share, everyone began to avoid eye contact in hopes they wouldn't be selected to read theirs aloud. To combat this mentality, we began to incorporate collaborative pieces that required the girls to write together. After a couple of weeks, one individual came up to me and mentioned how grateful she was that we hadn't given up on them when no one was willing to share on the first day. She thanked us for the opportunity to not only use her own voice, but for the chance to build a bond with those around her. By the end of the semester, this group of girls allowed me to publish over 17 pieces of their writing and art. The books containing these pieces, known as the SpeakOut! journals, were then circulated to hundreds of other individuals all over the United States and are still being circulated today. While these girls were often excluded from communities because of their involvement with the justice system, they were a community to each other and part of mine and a much larger community because of their willingness to share their writing.

When my time as an intern concluded, I knew I needed to continue my work with the incarcerated community. I wanted to learn more. I was then notified of a summer course being offered by Dr. Tobi Jacobi entitled Prison Literature in the United States. During this course we explored how writing can influence these justice-involved populations and how writing about this community can alter the community. I found myself most interested in the process of training employees to work with justice-involved individuals after reading Ted Conover's book,

*Newjack*. This text is centered around Conover's journey going through training to be a warden in New York's notorious Sing Sing Prison. What I found the most interesting though was the shift in mindset Conover had during the training. He went from being sympathetic and trusting of the prisoners to feeling like these individuals are animals that he, and others, need protection from. This change in mindset only occurred, though, after Conover was subjected to being tear gassed, harassed by other coworkers, attacked by a prisoner, and thrown into many situations without the proper training. It appeared that, given the proper training, Conover would not have been placed in many of the situations that brought conflict and violence. For instance, on his first nights of training, Conover was instructed on when and how to use deadly force. His trainer instructed him not to abuse this force, however quickly attempted to empathize saying he knew "that inmates were the "the lowest of the low, the scum of the earth," but that didn't excuse abusing our authority (33). This training prepared Conover to deal with situations by using violence. It was only months later when Conover was shadowing a fellow warden, Speros, that he was exposed to a different management style. Speros taught Conover that "by communicating effectively with inmates, [Correctional Officers] could keep problems from escalating, build relationships with inmates, and manage them better" (34). While this was only one peer, this interaction changed Conover's perspective to the point where he requested that in future training "some inmates should be brought in to talk to us" (35). By shifting the focus of training, Conover was able to change his management style and create an environment that was better for both him and the justice-involved individual.

The following semester, I was able to witness interactions between staff and justice-involved clients firsthand by continuing my internship with Larimer County Community Corrections. Like my time at Turning Point, I was asked to facilitate a writing workshop once a

week for the men at Community Corrections. During this hour I also got to converse with many of the staff members around the facility as well. Not only were we required to check in and out of the facility, giving us time to chat with staff, but staff are also required to do regular head checks and oftentimes would stay to listen to a couple different stories shared by the writers. During these moments, I noticed the personal connections shared between staff members and clients. Staff and clients referred to each other by first name, were familiar with each other's backgrounds, and often joked together. These interactions were starkly different from the experiences of those at Turning Point and the interactions shared by Conover. Noticing this, I became more and more interested in how these staff were trained differently than what I had been exposed to previously.

When I began to search for more current literature that examined the training of staff that work with justice-involved clients, there were very limited resources. Most of the resources that I found either were published before the time of Conover's piece or were legal documents that depicted what *should* happen when these individuals are trained. None of the resources found were able to provide a definitive structure for training. In addition to this, the limited resources I did find focused solely on training for the role of the prison warden. While wardens do directly work with the justice-involved population, they are far from being the only ones to do so. What research I was able to find indicated underrepresentation of individuals in other parts of the justice system, such as employees in Community Corrections. This lack of resources reflects, I began to realize, a gap in the field of prison literacy. I realized that new research would be relevant to scholars of writing, rhetoric, and social change, which engages with "the transformative potential of writing and rhetoric and analyzes the social, cultural, economic and historical forces shaping writing and rhetoric in theory and practice" ("Writing, Rhetoric, and

Social Change”). This realization led me to pursue the project described in these pages. Taken as a whole, my research has led me to believe that training is informed by many forces that need to be examined, as these have the power to transform the experience of both the staff and clients of Community Corrections.

### **Selecting the Current Research Approach and Questions**

Having decided to craft the current project around my experiences with the justice system and, more specifically, in Community Corrections, I set out to examine existing training and professional development opportunities for staff at regional Community Corrections facilities. I wanted to see how current staff are being taught to interact with justice-involved clients and consider why their approaches seem to differ from the approaches reported by Conover. To do this, I endeavored to interview as many staff as possible from the seven Community Corrections facilities in the state of Colorado, then analyzed this interview data from a perspective that I have found particularly generative, the principles of Design Justice. My hope has been to see how the training at these locations aligns with those principles and to describe other facets of the training that may lie outside the Design Justice framework.

As previously described, it is my sense that Colorado Corrections facilities are doing a better job than many, and so I decided to systematically research why. To do this, I selected to analyze interview data through the lens of Activity Theory and Design Justice. The Activity Theory lens provided a way to better understand the moving components of training in the Corrections environment, while Design Justice provided a way to measure the relative effectiveness of said training. Through analyzing the data through these lenses, I can offer recommendations for future growth to both practitioners of Design Justice and the staff of

Community Corrections. Overall, this thesis aims to examine multiple Community Corrections training structures by obtaining the perspectives of the trainers themselves to explore how training aligns with the principles of Design Justice. Ultimately, I aim to begin to answer the following four research questions:

1. Can Activity Theory be used to better understand the complex nature of Community Corrections training?
2. Do the principles of Design Justice accurately describe the process of training at Community Corrections in Colorado? Where does the current training fall short of Design Justice? Where is training surpassing Design Justice?
3. Is there a need to expand on the current principles of Design Justice to adapt to the realities of Community Corrections training?
4. What might be learned about Community Corrections by using Design Justice Principles and Activity Theory as lenses for understanding these important sites in the corrections system? What critical, new understanding of Community Corrections training might be gained from this examination?

### **Relevancy to the Field of Rhetoric and Composition**

This project engages with Community Literacy, Design Justice, and Activity Theory, all budding subjects and theorizations in the field of rhetoric and composition. Starting first with Community Literacy, training at Community Corrections can be envisioned as a form of Community Literacy. Higgins, Long, and Flower, in their piece “Community Literacy: A Rhetorical Model for Personal and Public Inquiry,” define successful Community Literacy as “a

unique space where intercultural partners can inquire into and deliberate about problems, working toward both personal and public change” (10). This discourse assumes that the users of the system are the experts of this system based on experiences that I, as a facilitator, do not have. It seeks to take advantage of what is already working within the system, instead of assuming that the users are unknowledgeable. In a later work, *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement*, Linda Flower builds on this definition of Community Literacy by arguing that literacy is achieved when “writers [reach] new levels of engagement with peers, parents, adults, and the community” (20). By analyzing training as a form of Community Literacy, this project aims to consider the community between the staff and the clients that thrives on what is already working inside this system.

In addition to situating Community Corrections training within Community Literacy, this project also engages with Community Literacy as a methodology by utilizing Community-Based Action Research. As defined by Juergensmeyer, Community-Based Action Research, built on the ideals of Flower and Friere, “exposes students to the complex issues and needs of the larger society” by “linking classroom learning [to] the conditions and contexts of the real world” (161). When students engage in this type of work, “they learn how to design research projects that work for and with stakeholders” to produce practical and ethical solutions to community problems (161). Overall, Community Literacy is founded upon the hope of deconstructing power hierarchies through ethical research with the community in question. This project aimed to adopt this ideology to accomplish that exact goal. Data in this project was collected using narrative interviews with staff members of Community Corrections. During these interviews, all questions aimed to understand what staff members experience with Community Corrections. By utilizing



this collection method, the experiences of those in Community Corrections are placed at the forefront of design.

While this thesis is most relevant to the subfield of Community Literacy in the field of rhetoric, the current work primarily engages with Design Justice, a recent theory that has grown as interest in Critical Literacy has grown. The theory of Design Justice is built around a set of ten principles that explicitly state that users of a system are the most knowledgeable informants about that system. This theory even goes so far as to say that for a system to ever truly be just, it *must* be built by the users of that system. This can explicitly be seen in the first principle of Design Justice, which states that “We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process.” Following this first principle, Design Justice also argues that “Wherever there is a problem, there are already people acting on the problem in some fashion” (Allied Media Project). While these ideas are also embodied in Community Literacy, the lens of Design Justice calls specific attention to the social change component of writing, rhetoric, and social change. This theory looks for the origins of power in a system, and then attempts to dismantle this power using the voices of people within the system. By connecting this project with the theory of Design Justice, I hope to allow space for more voices to participate in the construction of training at Community Corrections.

The importance of both Community Literacy and Design Justice to the field of rhetoric and composition were demonstrated at the 2023 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). The conference featured multiple talks specifically focused on Community Literacy, many of which were focused specifically on understanding prison literacies by listening to those who have been involved in the justice system. I noticed that many of these talks were centered around one central question: how can we, as academics, give more

voice to those in marginalized spaces without making assumptions about the communities we work with? While this is a difficult question to answer, oftentimes the first response was that outsiders of the marginalized community are unable to conduct this work alone. Multiple speakers acknowledged that to provide justice and avoid making assumptions, we must pass the microphone to the voices that have been silenced and then use our own privilege to support the work that must be done. This need to allow marginalized voices to speak and be a part of the academic community was then emphasized as the panels on prison literacy were mostly led by the voices of those who were previously incarcerated, instead of academics, who are often outsiders in the prison community. Voices like Daniel Todd and Johnny Page, both previously imprisoned in Cook County, Illinois, were given a microphone to discuss the importance of their experiences and to educate on the work that still needs to be done. The act of handing off the microphone puts into practice the primary tenet of Design Justice, centering the voices that are most affected by the system. The prison literacy conference presentations not only discussed the principles of Community Literacy and Design Justice but put the principles of both theories into action by creating space for marginalized communities to join an academic space, like the CCCC conference.

Before analyzing the data for the tenets of Community Literacy and Design Justice, though, this work first uses the lens of Activity Theory to further explain the training structure of Community Corrections. This theory argues that every activity has six subcomponents- subject, object, tools, rules, community, and division of labor. However, it also recognizes that each of these six pieces are connected, meaning that movement to one part of the activity affects all the other pieces of the activity. Therefore, by analyzing the data for these components, we can better understand the moving parts of the system being studied and, in this case, help to explain the

limitations of the activity of training. Overall, through utilization of Community Literacy, Design Justice, and Activity Theory, the current work engages in multiple points of intersection and interaction relevant to the field of rhetoric and composition. These theoretical frames might be considered when conducting future work in the field.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Community Corrections**

#### *Overview of Community Corrections*

Community Corrections provides a sentencing alternative, in lieu of prison incarceration, for felony offenders who are convicted of any crime punishable by a year or more in prison. Those assigned to Community Corrections are referred to as clients. There are two types of clients at Community Corrections: diversion and transition clients. Diversion clients are those placed in a Community Corrections program from a district court of the State of Colorado either as a condition of probation or as a direct sentence to Community Corrections, while transition clients are those who move from a Department of Corrections prison to a Community Corrections facility. Regardless of the type of client, all clients are required to go through four levels of residential care and four levels of non-residential care to complete their time at Community Corrections. To make it through these levels, clients are asked to make fundamental changes to their behavior in hopes of reducing recidivism, or a return to criminal behavior and prison. While Community Corrections programs are funded by the state, from the state general fund, clients are also required to work when able to help pay for their supervision and treatment. The clients' progress is then monitored by multiple parties, including administrators, case managers, and Community Corrections specialists. Overall, Community Corrections attempts to provide a supportive environment for previous offenders to safely reenter unsupervised society and to make them accountable, even at the level of financing their own supervision, to the

program. What follows is a detailed examination of the history and research available on Community Corrections.

### *A Deeper Examination of Community Corrections*

While many are unaware that Community Corrections exist, examples of early Community Corrections go as far back as the early 1700s to offer those convicted of a crime “judicial reprieve,” as an alternative to prison (Kent State). Since its conception, Community Corrections has continued to serve as an alternative sentence but has also expanded to include “management of the state's adult prison system, community corrections, intensive supervision program-inmate (ISP-I), and parole” (Office of Operations). To understand the role of Community Corrections in the larger penal system, please see figure 1, the Sequential Intercept Model. This diagram details a justice-involved individual's journey from leaving the community to reentering the community. From this diagram, we can see that Community Corrections does fall towards the end of the diagram, as the last step before justice-involved individuals return to unsupervised society. This also means that it is the responsibility of Community Corrections to prepare clients for reentering the world of work, reconnecting with family and friends, avoiding everyday stressors that could cause them to re-offend, and addressing many other challenges. For a further explanation of the position of Community Corrections in reference to the larger justice system, please see the Activity Theory portion of the Literature Review. Essentially, while very little has been done to publicize the mission of Community Corrections, this paucity of information should not distract from its important mission.



To ensure that facilities successfully reenter the majority of their clients into unsupervised society, the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice has extensively defined standards and statutes of Community Corrections. These regulations must be met by all 33 Community Corrections facilities in Colorado (see Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, *Find Community Corrections Programs* for further details on Colorado’s Community Corrections locations). Turning first to the statutes, entitled Title 17, figure 2 shows all the subjects covered under these statutes. I would like to focus specifically on 17-27-102, which provides the definitions of what Community Corrections is and how it should be structured.

<a href="#">16-22-102</a>	Definitions
<a href="#">16-22-103</a>	Sex offender registration - required - applicability - exception
<a href="#">16-22-105</a>	Notice - requirements - residence - presumption
<a href="#">16-22-106</a>	Duties - probation department - community corrections administrator - court personnel - jail personnel - notice
<a href="#">16-22-108</a>	Registration - procedure - frequency - place - change of address - fee
<a href="#">16-23-103</a>	Collection of biological samples from persons arrested for or charged with felonies
<a href="#">17-27-101</a>	Legislative declaration
<a href="#">17-27-102</a>	Definitions
<a href="#">17-27-103</a>	Community corrections boards - establishment - duties
<a href="#">17-27-103.5</a>	Statements relating to a transitional referral to community corrections
<a href="#">17-27-104</a>	Community corrections programs operated by units of local government, state agencies, or non-governmental agencies
<a href="#">17-27-106</a>	Escape from custody from a community corrections program
<a href="#">17-27-108</a>	Division of Criminal Justice in the Department of Public Safety - duties - community corrections contracts
<a href="#">18-1.3-301</a>	Authority to place offenders in community corrections programs (formerly 17-27-105)
<a href="#">18-7-701</a>	Sexual conduct in a correctional institution.
<a href="#">HB 18-1251</a>	House Bill 1251
<a href="#">PREA (Federal)</a>	National Prison Rape Elimination Act Standards

Figure 2. Content of the Statutes of Community Corrections

This document establishes a specific structure of Community Corrections through operationalizing words such as “Community Corrections,” “Offenders,” and “Referring Agency.” A more specific example of this is the definition of a "Community Corrections Board," which oversees the acceptance or the rejection of potential clients (1). It also expands on the responsibilities of Community Corrections:

Community corrections program means a community-based or community-oriented program that provides supervision of offenders... Such program may provide residential or nonresidential services for offenders, monitoring of the activities of offenders, oversight of victim restitution and community service by offenders, programs and services to aid offenders in obtaining and holding regular employment, programs and services to aid offenders in enrolling in and maintaining academic courses, programs and services to aid offenders in participating in vocational training programs... as may be appropriate to aid in offender rehabilitation and public safety. (2)

This elaborated definition of what Community Corrections is continues to reinforce the department’s importance and its complex nature. In addition to the statutes listed in Title 17, Community Corrections facilities are also required to follow the yearly updated standards, also published by Colorado’s Division of Criminal Justice. The 2022 version of this document, which can be found on their website, contains 52 pages of standards that must be met by both staff and clients in order to remain operating. Some of the topics include Client Supervision, Environment/Facility Standards, Organizational Management, Program Development, and Targeting Interventions. The most relevant portion for this project though is entitled Staff



Development, which clarifies the minimum requirements for staff members and professional development requirements.

### *The Staff of Community Corrections*

Beginning with the qualifications for staff members, the only qualification listed for all employees is that they “must be at least 18 years of age” (33). In fact, in the 2022 version of this document, the Standard for Staff Selection (SD-010) was removed. However, it does specify that “program administrators shall have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree in social or behavioral sciences, criminal justice, business or public administration, or related fields, and four years of related experience to include supervisory or management responsibilities” (33). From this, it can be concluded that lower-level positions at Community Corrections are not required to have previous experience or applicable educational background. It is only administrators who are required to have relevant educational and work history. This may indicate a need to train entry-level staff more extensively, as they are not required to have any educational experience in Criminal Justice or be familiar with the Corrections environment which is needed to thrive in this field as an employee. Corrections has responded to this potential issue by clearly outlining the training requirements for all Corrections staff that should prepare them for their roles.

The first listed standard is that all programs must have “written policies, procedures and established practices” that contain “evidence-based practices relevant to all of their job duties or assignments” to ensure that all employees are operating on the same page and have a document that they can refer to, even after the completion of training (34). The standards also state that employees should receive “forty (40) hours of formal orientation training at a minimum” within the first 90 days after being hired. Initial training is not the only training requirement though.

Employees are also required to complete “forty (40) [more] hours of ongoing annual professional development [that] include[s] training, coaching, and staff skill building” (34). It then goes further by elaborating on the special training needed to interact with individuals who are convicted sex offenders. However, it should be noted that standards for Coaching and Leadership Development have also been removed by the state of Colorado, the authors of this document, from the standards. The document simply states, “this Standard was removed” (Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, 36). While no reasoning was provided to why the two standards were removed, there is now no guidance on the topics of Coaching and Leadership Development. This may lead to staff not being trained at all in these areas, which could negatively affect staffs’ working environments and clients’ living environments. Overall, these statutes and standards provided by the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice are intended to act as the basic structure of a Community Corrections facility.

The above section has attempted to synthesize the function, structure, and the staff of training according to the legal regulations of Community Corrections. These definitions will be expanded on in later sections of this work.

### *Relevancy to the Field*

Much of the previous research on Corrections has been completed in the fields of Criminal Justice and Psychology (Cullen; Mailings, et al.; Stack, et al.). While I was unable to locate any research on Community Corrections in the field of rhetoric and composition, I argue that the goals of Community Corrections can be strongly informed by the field of rhetoric and composition. As previously described, Community Corrections aims to provide support for reentry for all who have been placed in the justice system. This aim is achieved by providing

resources to clients and intensive staff training. Similarly, the field of rhetoric and composition aims to prepare individuals to face social conflict through both writing and teaching. Scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition advocate for social change through work with government agencies, in the nonprofit sphere, and within public relations (Colorado State University). Remembering that staff training involves writing and teaching, the field of rhetoric and composition appears to be appropriate for the current research.

In addition to this, as argued in the introduction of this thesis, I believe research with Community Corrections belongs in the subfield of Community Literacy in the rhetoric and composition field. While I was unable to find research specifically looking at Community Corrections in the field now, there is an abundant amount of research available on prisons and jails, another intercept in the justice system. In expanding our thinking to other areas of the justice system, we also expand our understanding of the concept community. The remainder of the literature review will explore the relevant intersections between rhetoric and composition and Community Corrections, namely Activity Theory and Design Justice.

## **Activity Theory**

### *Overview of Activity Theory*

Another intersection with the field of rhetoric and composition is the current work's utilization of Activity Theory. Beginning first as a psychological framework in the Soviet Union, this theory works to redefine an activity to consider the social, historical, and cultural contexts of said activity. Since its emergence, Activity Theory has undergone four different generations. The following sections will examine some of the origins and uses of Activity Theory. Broadly though, through the application of this lens, researchers can get a better sense of the communities

that their work affects and consider how changes to an activity may affect the entire activity. In addition to outlining what Activity Theory is, I also will show how this lens benefits the current work by suggesting that it can be used to better understand the complex nature of training at Community Corrections facilities.

### *Origins of Activity Theory*

The first generation of Activity Theory, as previously stated, was used in the field of Psychology in the Soviet Union. The primary uses of Activity Theory during this time had a “strong focus on material and symbolic mediation, internalization of external forms of mediation, and the zone of proximal development” as described by Vygotsky and his student, A.N. Leontiev (McNely). These two scholars also developed the second generation of Activity Theory, which introduced the concepts of subject, object, and tools into Activity Theory (figure 3). Here, the subject is the human subject(s) initiating the activity, the object is the goal of the current activity, and the tools are the resources used to accomplish these goals. Vygotsky primarily applied this theory to the development of language (see Vygotsky, L. *Thought and language*.) Through this work, Vygotsky connected Activity Theory to Language by examining “signs as psychological tools, stages in the child’s concept formation, the development of word meaning, and the problem of inner speech” (Kozulin, 267).

The work of Vygotsky and Leontiev was then picked up by educational scholars, among them Engestrom. Engestrom labeled Activity Theory as “the best kept secret of academia” as it provides a way of analyzing data recorded in real classrooms and designing change when trouble and contradictions become evident” (Roth and Lee, 188). As seen in figure 4, however, to successfully analyze data, Engestrom felt that the diagram from the earlier generation of Activity

Theory needed to be expanded upon. Engestrom, with assistance from Michael Cole, published “A Cultural-Historical Approach to Distributed Cognition” to describe the need for these changes. Essentially, in this work, the authors claim that earlier work fails to “account for the collective nature of human activities” (7). To address this, Engestrom proposes three new subcomponents of Activity Theory: Community, Rules, and the Division of Labor. Community is labeled as an essential part of Activity Theory as it recognizes that human subjects, a previous part of the activity diagram, are inherently part of communities, which then leads to rules as each of these communities has values and norms, which then finally leads to the Division of Labor. As communities aim to achieve their goals while operating within communities, tasks and power are divided among the participants of the activity system. A diagram based on this latter Engestrom model was built for the current work. This diagram (figure 5) shows the important components of Community Corrections as an Activity. Within Community Corrections, the object is normally reentry into ‘normal’ society and the subject is defined as the client completing the work. However, the subject is supported by a community of staff, administration, and other clients to reach their goals. In addition to this, the outcome is achieved if each member of the community completes their assigned tasks (division of labor) and follows the rules and norms of Community Corrections as they do so. Finally, all this work is dependent on resources, with monetary support and time being two key resources needed to accomplish reentry.

However, this expansion of the Activity Diagram was not the only major contribution Engestrom made to Activity Theory. He also theorized how multiple activity systems can interact in order to accomplish a shared goal (figure 6). This newer diagram allowed scholars to begin using Activity Theory in more complex ways. Using this new, expanded diagram, scholars in rhetoric and composition continued to study systems in the classroom, but also expanded to

begin thinking about “human-computer interaction, interaction design, computer-supported cooperative work” and other fields that looked at “how technology mediates human work, learning and play” (McNely). Other areas of application include employment research (University of Warwick), analyzing project-based organizations (Blackler; Puonti; Vakkayil), and criminology (Groff; Leukfeldt & Yar) The third generation is what is operationalized for the current research. Figure 7 depicts an overlapping and interacting Activity Diagram for Community Corrections. Through this figure, we can see the complex nature of Community Corrections, as well as the impact Community Corrections has on other organizations. Please note that each circle represents a different activity system, indicating that each circle has its own goals and barriers that must be taken into consideration when altering the activity in any way.

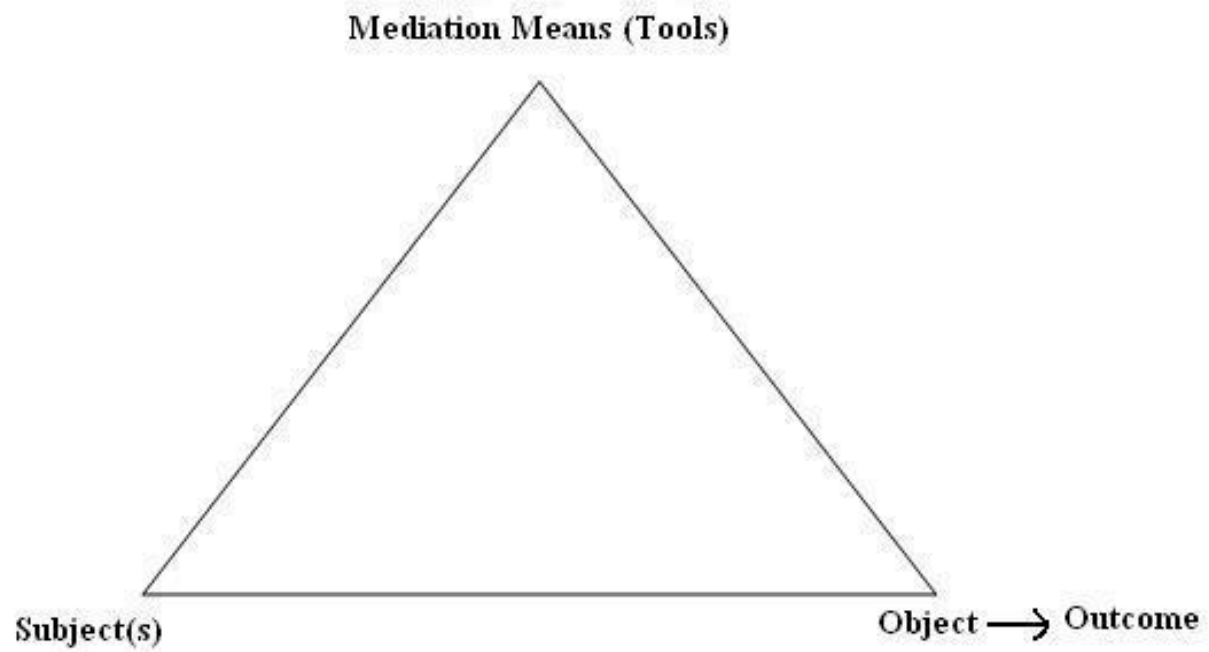


Figure 3. A 1st generation Activity diagram

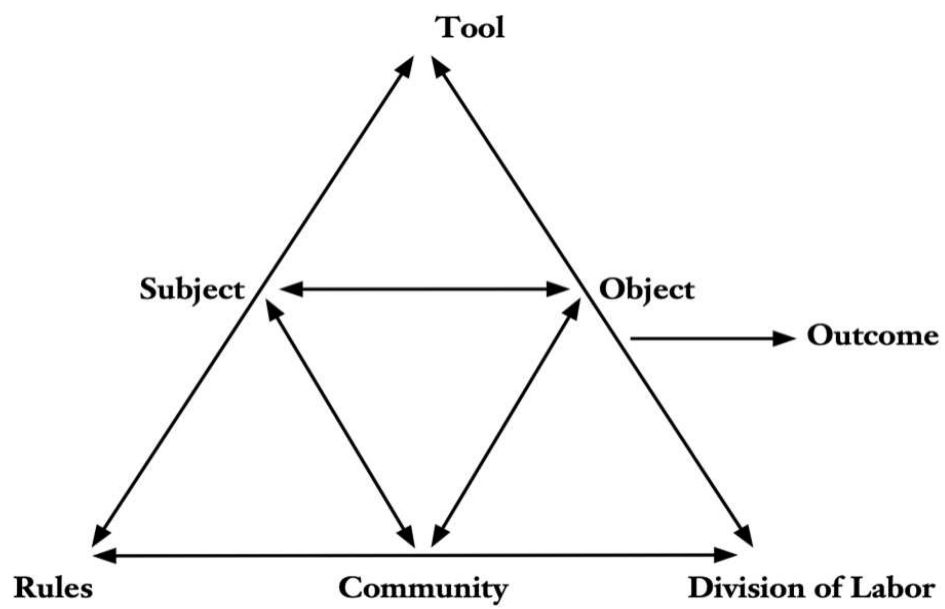


Figure 4. A 2nd generation Activity Diagram

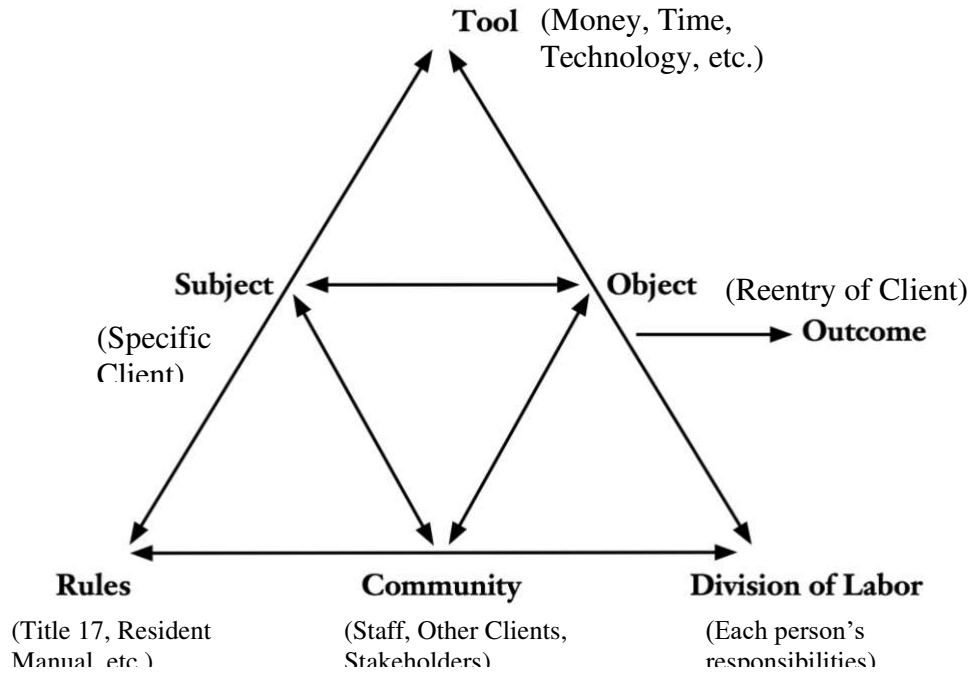


Figure 5. Activity Diagram for Community Corrections

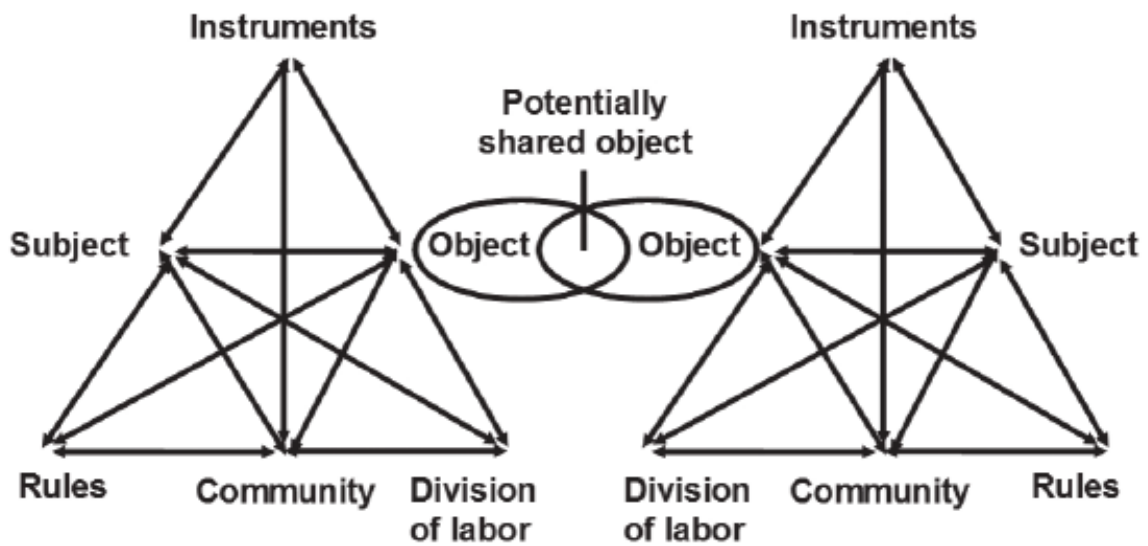


Figure 6. A 3rd generation Interacting Activities Diagram



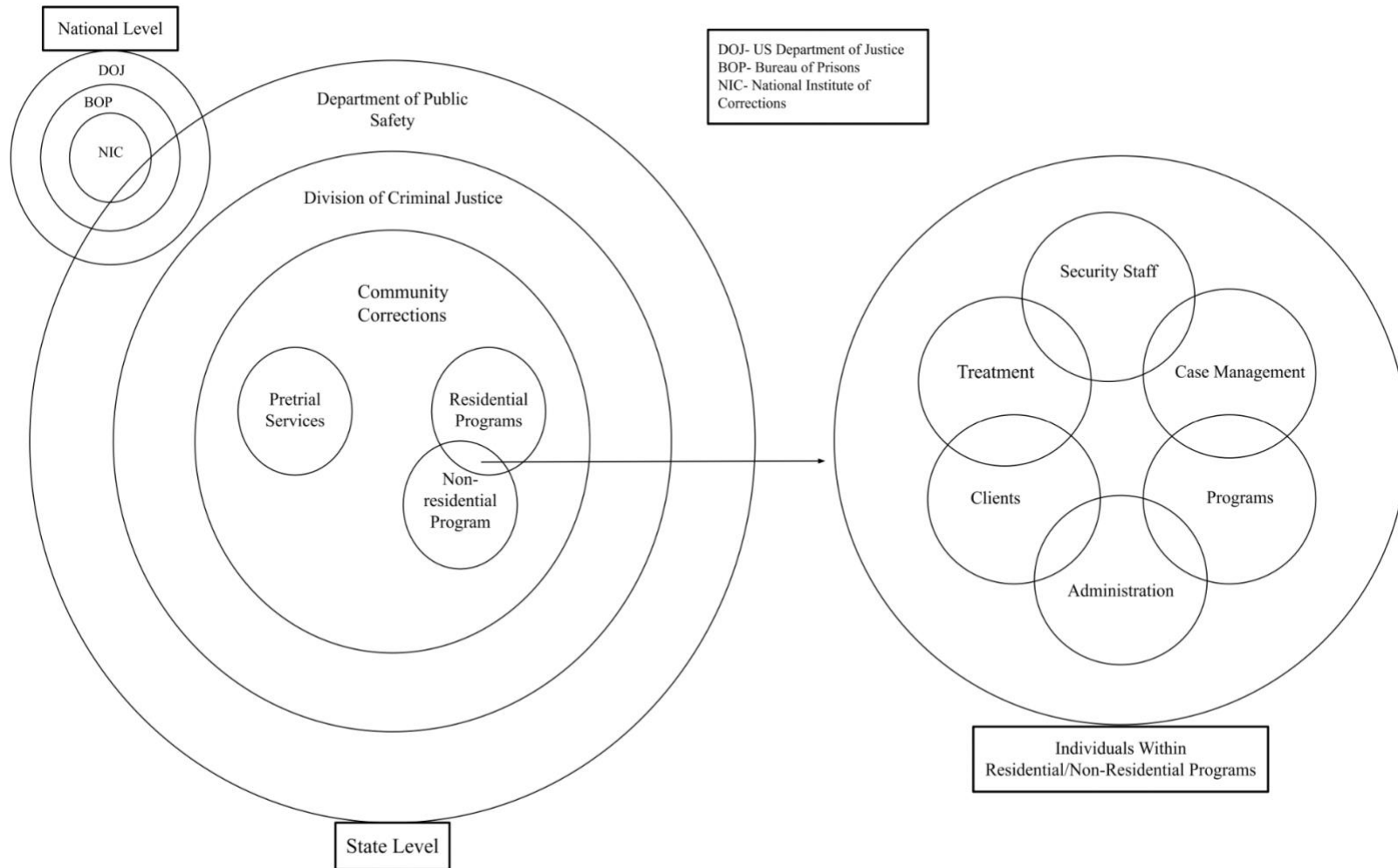


Figure 7. An Overlapping and Interacting Activities Diagram

### *Examples of Activity Theory in the Field of Rhetoric and Composition*

As previously mentioned, in the field of rhetoric and composition, Activity Theory has primarily been used to explain activities in the classroom. One example from Cornelius and Herrenkohl, in 2004, takes a specific look at the Division of Labor component in Activity Theory. In this study, researchers observed different sixth grade classrooms where students were asked to work with a peer to complete the assignment. By applying the lens of Activity Theory, researchers were able to conclude that by shifting the responsibility to the students, altering the division of labor, students had more ownership of their own ideas, developed a stronger sense of agency, and created more discourse between peers and with the instructor. Overall, by shifting only instruction type, researchers were able to see how changes in the division of labor can lead to new insights into the strengths and weaknesses of these structures. Similar results were found in a later study conducted by Patchen and Smithenry. Here, researchers observed three different learning environments where participants were instructed in three different ways. Participants were either talked to as an individual, as a group, or as a collective. In places where labor was more divided between students and instructors, the students assumed more agency and relied on each other to accomplish the goal. However, when instructed as individuals, students asked fewer questions and thought of the teacher as the sole authority figure. Researchers conclude by arguing that these results do not suggest teaching a class as a collective is better but do ensure that instruction style did change the way students completed the required activity.

These examples began to show how, when used as a theoretical framework, Activity Theory can illuminate how changes in activity that cause a larger change in activity system. So far, I have looked strictly at how Activity Theory works in the classroom environment, as this is the primary way rhetoric and composition has utilized the theory. However, minimal research has been conducted to look at the way Activity Theory can work in communities.

### *Activity Theory's Influence on the Workspace*

In addition to the previous work conducted in the classroom, Activity Theory has also been used to examine corporate society. In an early example, written by de Leede, et al. researchers examine the structure of a committee responsible for making major decisions in a large corporation. The aim is then to understand how the group must function to make these decisions. After analyzing the process of multiple team decisions, researchers noted that this analysis revealed “delegation of authority to self-managing teams [was] not enough to make [members] accountable” (14). In addition, researchers found the Activity Theory framework useful for its potential for analyzing the allocation of responsibilities and resources within a team setting” (14). While this work reported similar findings as those conducted in the field of education, this research reminds us that this framework is not limited to understanding classroom activities. More recent work, such as Ogawa, et al.'s, also consider work “beyond schools to examine learning in other types of educational organizations” (83). Here, Activity Theory is combined with new institutionalism in organizational theory to illuminate the relationship between learning and social context in formal organizations. Research describes the benefit of this lens by saying “CHAT explains that people and their social contexts are deeply connected to prior generations through tools, rules, and the like” and therefore allows them to better understand the “relative stability of highly institutionalized organizational forms” (92). This

research builds on the prior research by further establishing Activity Theory's ability to analyze the structure of any organization and elaborates on prior research by showing Activity Theory's capacity to be combined with additional theoretical lenses.

Through these two examples, we can continue to see how Activity can analyze the structure of organizations. However, these examples also expand on previous work by looking at structures outside of academia.

### *Use of Activity Theory in the Current Work*

In the current work, Activity Theory Activity Theory allowed me to better comprehend the complex environment at Community Corrections and offer solutions tailored specifically to the structure of the activity engaged in there. After analyzing the context or setting using the lens of Activity Theory, I then also applied the principles of Design Justice to the analysis of the Community Corrections professional development

## **Design Justice**

### *Overview of Design Justice*

To understand the approach of Design Justice, we must first understand what design is. To do this, I would like to turn to the work of Sasha Costanza-Chock, a professor of media and design at Northwestern University, whose work will be discussed in more detail later in this section, and who defines design as a “verb and a noun” that can describe:

Basic human activity and a highly professionalized field of practice (or several such fields), a way of manipulating future objects and systems using specialized software and

an everyday use of traditional knowledge embedded in indigenous lifeways, a type of work with one's hands and a way of thinking, an art and a science, and more.

While this may seem broad, this broadness is intentional as it allows for any process, or activity, to be reconceptualized as a design that affects everyone. Some examples of design include the TSA check at the airport, the layout of a classroom, or the route of a city bus. Moving then to Design Justice, this approach thinks specifically about the way that these designs affect everyone and yet, typically few are involved in the design process. As a response, theorists behind Design Justice offer ten principles that aim to rethink design by centering the individuals who are directly affected yet normally marginalized by design. The following sections will detail the principles of Design Justice, while providing relevant examples of Design Justice at work, and finally operationalize these principles for the current work. Before beginning this section, I would like to acknowledge a shortcoming in the current thesis. Due to the vulnerabilities of the community and research restrictions, I was not able to interview clients, a party that is also directly impacted by design. Therefore, when operationalized for the current work, I wish to acknowledge that I was unable to fully carry out Design Justice as I was not able to access half of the users of the system who are also the people most affected by the design of the systems.

### *Foundational Work in Design Justice*

In many ways, the mission and principles of Design Justice mirror those of Community Literacy. Design Justice emerged from the Allied Media Conference, hosted by Allied Media Projects, in 2014. To best understand Design Justice, it is then best to first understand the mission and principles of the Allied Media Projects. The first Allied Media Conference, sponsored by the Sponsored Projects Program, was held in 1999. Since then, this organization

has worked to “cultivate media for liberation,” with an understanding that this requires “personal, collective, and systemic transformation.” Since its establishment, the Allied Media Projects has worked to establish a set of twelve principles that each identify ways to fight against the oppression that comes as a result of isolating marginalized voices in digital media. It is then from these principles that the Design Justice Network emerged. Like the principles created by the AMC, Design Justice’s tenets also focus on personal, collective, and systemic change, but move beyond a focus on media to consider the design of all systems. Design has been defined by Anne-Marie Willis as “deliberat[ing], plan[ning] and scheme[ing] in ways which prefigure our actions and makings [...] we design our world, while our world acts back on us and designs us.” These values are then reflected in the Network’s mission statement to “rethink design processes, center people who are normally marginalized by design, and use collaborative, creative practices to address the deepest challenges our communities face.” From there, 30 participants from community organizations or design companies gathered to form the principles of Design Justice, which center around the belief that those who are most affected by design are often those who are least involved in the creation of that design. The following are the ten, living principles of Design Justice:

1. We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems.
2. We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process.
3. We prioritize design’s impact on the community over the intentions of the designer.
4. We view change as emergent from an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process, rather than as a point at the end of a process.

5. We see the role of the designer as a facilitator rather than an expert.
6. We believe that everyone is an expert based on their own lived experience, and that we all have unique and brilliant contributions to bring to a design process.
7. We share design knowledge and tools with our communities.
8. We work towards sustainable, community-led and -controlled outcomes.
9. We work towards non-exploitative solutions that reconnect us to the earth and to each other.
10. Before seeking new design solutions, we look for what is already working at the community level. We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices.

These principles have since been operationalized in many ways. In the field of rhetoric and composition a large portion of Design Justice work has been conducted by Sasha Costanza-Chock, who specializes in “networked social movements, transformative media organizing, and design justice.” Costanza-Chock’s work with Design Justice began in 2018 after being appointed as a Steering Committee Member of the Design Justice Network and with the publication of “Design justice: Towards an Intersectional Feminist Framework for Design Theory and Practice.” In this work Costanza-Chock dissects the primary components of Design Justice, including intersectionality and the matrix of domination, to provide a more holistic picture of Design Justice. Through this work, the reader can identify that this theory has many ideals but is primarily a theory of practice. This means that, for Design Justice to be effective, it must be actively used in public spaces to question the equity of a design. It is also through this work that we can begin to understand the concept of design. Not only does Costanza-Chock provide a working definition of what design is, she also provides examples of design in our day-to-day life.

For example, she discusses TSA security check required by the airport in detail. This design is built to get individuals through the airport in a fast and secure manner, but as identified by Costanza-Chock, is not built with all individuals in mind. Individuals who identify as transgender or nonbinary often face difficulty when using this design because the security system was envisioned only for male-born and female-born individuals. Overall, Costanza-Chock argues that “Design Justice encourages a shift from deficit to asset-based approaches to design processes.”

In later work, Costanza-Chock puts these principles into practice. For example, in two of the chapters, “Design Practices: “Nothing about Us without Us”” and “Design pedagogies: “There’s something wrong with this system!”” of her larger work *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*, Costanza-Chock describes multiple designs that have failed to align with the principles of Design Justice and reimagines these designs in more just ways. In the chapter “Design Practices: “Nothing About Us Without Us,” the authors detail Design Justice’s connection with Critical Disability Studies, while also connecting the concept of Community Literacy and Design Justice:

Design justice practitioners, like community organizers, approach the question of who gets to speak for the community from a community asset perspective. This is rooted in the principle that wherever people face challenges, they are always already working to deal with those challenges; wherever a community is oppressed, they are always already developing strategies to resist oppression. (92)

This connection between Community Literacy and Design Justice depicts the importance of these two lenses in the current work. As previously stated, the current work aims to listen to the



voices of Community Corrections practitioners to assess the need for changes to training. In this way, this project aspires to reflect the above quote and the principles of both Design Justice.

### *Design Justice's Work with Professional Development*

Design Justice has heavily intersected with professional development, or training, specifically in the field of education. Amy Collier, an Associate Provost for Digital Learning at Middlebury College who has published heavily on digital pedagogies and technologies, Collier synthesizes many classroom initiatives that encompass the principles of Design Justice and then discusses the importance of these initiatives. Some of the primary examples included by Collier are the Critical Design Lab, a program that gives faculty resources for equity mapping tools, and the Right to Learn Undergraduate Research Collective by the University of Colorado Denver, which utilizes the voices of undergraduate students to initiate change in academia. Both programs “lead to designs that focus on justice for marginalized and disenfranchised teachers and students.” However, Collier also points to the fact that these initiatives will fail without training staff on how to properly carry out these initiatives. She warns against “making gestures toward inclusive design and design justice without committing to the transformation required to change the structures of inequality and oppression that shape our students’ lives” (22). To ensure this does not happen, Collier suggests extensive training on Design Justice where participants “outline steps we can take to fight against harm” (22). While this example does not explicitly combine Design Justice with professional development, it does stress the importance of using and teaching a Design Justice lens to create sustainable training for classroom innovation.

For an explicit connection between Design Justice and professional development, we can turn to Spitzberg, et al.'s 2020 work. In this piece, 12 designers and design researchers aimed to

teach 64 educators how to apply the principles of Design Justice in their work environment. Participants were asked to work through 12 scenarios using the theoretical lens of design justice. To evaluate their ability to do so, in the spirit of Design Justice, participants were encouraged to share how they saw the Design Justice principles working in the training, instead of telling participants how Design Justice should be used. Researchers found that participants shared being drawn towards strategies that were collective, considered positionality, and used power mapping, all of which reflect the goals of Design Justice. By using Design Justice in professional development, employees were exposed to new strategies that require students to be more involved and learned how to interact with peers in a similar way. This piece ultimately takes the theories of Design Justice, shared by Collier, and turns it into practice.

While the above resources help explain how Design Justice can work with professional development, they are also very limited. It should be noted that all the above research has been conducted in or for the classroom. Clearly, Design Justice can serve well in the classroom, but this is far from its only application.

#### *Use of Design Justice in the Current Work*

This project engages with Design Justice as both a methodology and a theoretical framework for analysis. Beginning with methodology, the current project aims to center the voices of the Community Corrections system by using narrative interviews of those conducting training. In addition, data was analyzed for the inclusion of Design Justice principles to see how these principles align with the work of Community Corrections. Lastly, this project also makes recommendations on how Design Justice may need to be expanded to assist the work of

Community Corrections. In this way, the theory of Design Justice serves as a foundation for the current study.

### **Conclusion of Literature Review**

The above chapter has attempted to synthesize literature surrounding Community Corrections, Activity Theory, and Design Justice and share their relevance to the current work. The following chapter will continue to operationalize the above work by detailing the methodology that was used throughout this thesis.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Overview of the Current Research

The current research aims to examine existing training for Community Corrections employees using the lens of Design Justice and Activity Theory. The theory of Design Justice uses ten principles to argue that no design will ever be just unless it centers the design around the users. In this project, I examine the degree to which the training in multiple Colorado Community Corrections facilities align with the principles of Design Justice. Then, by analyzing for the components of Activity Theory, I was able to get a better understanding of Community Corrections' complex and contextual nature and its interactions with other activity systems. The findings from these analyses were used to answer the following four research questions:

1. Can Activity Theory be used to better understand the complex nature of Community Corrections training?
2. Do the principles of Design Justice accurately describe the process of training at Community Corrections in Colorado? Where does the current training fall short of Design Justice? Where is training surpassing Design Justice?
3. Is there a need to expand on the current principles of Design Justice to adapt to the realities of Community Corrections training?
4. What might be learned about Community Corrections by using Design Justice Principles and Activity Theory as lenses for understanding these important sites in the corrections system? What critical, new understanding of Community Corrections training might be gained from this examination?

To address the above research questions, I completed an application with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct interviews with the staff members of Community Corrections. During this process, I was asked to outline my positionality, procedures, instruments, and methodology. After the project was approved by the IRB, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a variety of staff members within the Colorado Community Corrections community. Recruitment was done using a snowballing method, starting with the Directors of Community Corrections, and slowly moving to entry-level positions such as Case Managers and Community Corrections Specialists. A total of 24 participants were recruited from nine Community Corrections facilities across the state of Colorado. In these semi-structured interviews, I asked staff about their experience with Community Corrections training and allowed them to share their thoughts about how their experience could be improved, if they felt that it could have. To form the appropriate instruments and analyze data effectively, I educated myself on Activity Theory, Community Literacy, and Design Justice. Please see Appendix A for the survey instrument. After the interviews were conducted, I then conducted a critical content analysis of qualitative data from the interviews, where I identified how the current training aligns with principles of Design Justice and subsequently how approaches used and not used can be analyzed through an application of activity theory.

To appropriately conduct this research, it was important to remember my positionality as a researcher and to ensure that I was aware of the cultural norms present in the justice system. At the time of the data collection, I had been working in the Corrections space for over two years. I first started working in this field during my first year of graduate school by interning with the Community Literacy Center (CLC). The internship allowed me to meet weekly with adolescents who had recently been released from a detention center and were working to return home. I was

also able to engage with other individuals doing the same work at different sites and, therefore, was able to learn about successful ways to work between the academy and the community. I then was able to take a summer course on Prison Literature in the United States, where we explored how writing can influence these populations and how writing about this community can alter the community. This is where I learned that I am passionate about the process of reentry into ‘normal’ society after facing confinement. Lastly, my work with the Community Literacy Center (CLC) continued throughout the study period as I volunteered at Larimer County Community Corrections. However, it must be said that despite these involvements, I am not an insider in this environment. While I am privileged to be actively involved in this space, I do not show up and actively participate day in and day out as those I am interviewing do, meaning that I have no experience with Community Corrections as a client or as a paid employee. Practically speaking, what this means is that I am positioned as an outsider attempting to gain access to insider knowledge and this effort has occurred in the closed environment of the justice system generally and Community Corrections specifically. The effect of my status as an outsider will be further discussed in the limitations section of this chapter.

My connection with Community Corrections solely comes from my work with the CLC at Colorado State University, an internship opportunity provided through the English department. As previously stated, this organization is founded on the principles of Community Literacy, an important field within Rhetoric and Composition, which argues for inclusion of marginalized voices. The CLC does its work by sending interns into the community to facilitate writing groups with those who face some form of confinement, including incarceration. While this has enlightened me to the cultural norms and standards of Community Corrections, again, it does not make me an insider in this community. Throughout the collection and analysis process, I had to

actively remember my position as an outsider of the system and the cultural norms functioning in the system.

## **Participants**

At the beginning of this project, I proposed to interview both staff and clients of Community Corrections. This population was selected so that my methodology would more fully align with principles of Design Justice, which state that anyone affected by the design should be involved in the process of designing. However, due to the vulnerable nature of those incarcerated within the justice system and the sensitivity around granting access to an outsider it became clear that it would not be possible to interview clients. For example, a stated concern when I first expressed desire to interview clients is that clients would feel uncomfortable during the interview process because I was an outsider of the community. Acknowledging my inability to become an insider in this community in the limited time frame I had available, I made the difficult decision to focus solely on the staff of Community Corrections. This limitation will be explored further in the concluding chapter of this work.

After shifting my focus to staff, I used Community Corrections websites to locate the email address of a contact person for each facility. Much of my initial contact was with the executive directors at Community Corrections and operations managers. During these initial meetings, I tried to show “unconditional positive regard” for these individuals and their employees (Rogers). My goal was simply to understand, to learn, and not to judge the complex work they do. Once my intentions were established, all were very willing to send the approved recruitment materials (Appendix B) to their staff. Staff then proceeded to contact me over email to set up a time to interview. I was also able to visit two facilities, Larimer County Community

Corrections and Intervention Community Corrections Services of Weld County, where they placed me in a room and allowed their staff to interview as they felt comfortable and were available.

A full breakdown of the roles participants occupied in Community Corrections can be found in Appendix C. To participate, the participant had to be able to respond to questions in a verbal or written manner in English due to my limited understanding of other languages. They also were required to be actively employed by Community Corrections, but never a client at Community Corrections, in order to ensure that my project focused on the population directly affected by the design of training. Lastly, participants needed to be 18 years old or over to consent to participate. The interviews contained five open-ended questions to further understand staff's experiences with training and share any concerns they had with the current implementation of training. The shortest interview was approximately 27 minutes long, while the longest was approximately 57 minutes long.

To protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality, I interviewed each participant only once, and in two primary ways. First, I was offered a space at two different Correctional facilities, allowing me to interview some participants in person. Those I was unable to meet with in-person, I met with over Zoom. Informed consent was collected before the interview began and no demographic information about the participant was collected. At the beginning of the interview, the participant and I selected a pseudonym that would be used to reference any of their data. In the informed consent document, I also asked participants if they were comfortable with my reaching out for a follow-up interview if further clarification or information is needed. This was ultimately not needed. Lastly, the participants were assured that their audio responses would not be shared with anyone outside of the research team and were informed that their data could



be quoted from in the final product. Member checking was not conducted on this data due to the nature of the participants' work environments. Member checking would have taken additional time out of the workday that participants needed to meet client and staff needs.

### **Collection Procedure**

Semi-structured interview data was collected for this project. Data began as interviews that were recorded on a password-protected laptop and then stored in a password-protected file. Each file was labeled with a pseudonym selected by the participant before the interview begins. At no point was their legal name connected with this pseudonym. The only time their name was recorded was on the informed consent, which was kept separate from the audio file in a locked cabinet in the office of thesis advisor Sue Doe. After written consent was gathered and a pseudonym was decided on by the participant, the participant was asked a series of five questions that reflected on their experiences and involvement with training at Community Corrections. These interview questions were built on principles of Community Literacy and Design Justice. Beginning with Community Literacy, by creating interviews that centered around the experience of the users of the system, Community Literacy would argue that I was able to see a more holistic picture of Community Corrections training as this discourse assumes that the participant is an expert in this system based on experiences that I, as a facilitator, do not have. The methodology of Community Literacy was outlined in Arola's piece, when the researcher presents a list of questions that scholars should use as a framework when creating instruments and analyzing data:

Who defined the research problem? For whom is this study worthy and relevant?

Who says so? What knowledge will the community gain from this study? What

knowledge will the researcher gain from this study? What are some likely positive outcomes from this study? What are some possible negative outcomes? How can the negative outcomes be eliminated? To whom is the researcher accountable? What processes are in place to support the research, the researched, and the researcher?

I operationalized these questions in the current work by anticipating the responses of interviewees to interview questions. By thinking about the questions in this way, I was able to analyze the aims of each question and consider how the question will further the current research. It was my hope to take advantage of the expertise of those working within the system, instead of assuming that the users were unknowledgeable, and in doing so, position myself as a facilitator instead of an expert in the Corrections environment. This principle is also mirrored in Design Justice, which is founded on the principle, “We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process” and argues that “Wherever there is a problem, there are already people acting on the problem in some fashion” (Allied Media Project).

After beginning the interview, participants were able to guide the conversation how they saw fit due to the narrative format of the questions. Narrative inquiry, originally coined by Connelly and Clandinin, is typically used to “deconstruct that researcher–participant binary by allowing researchers to “view themselves as narrators as they develop interpretations and find ways in which to present or publish their ideas about the narratives, they studied ...” (Chase, 656). Essentially, this interview style allowed the participant to focus on the experiences they deemed relevant to share and direct the flow of the conversation to areas they felt were important and allowed me, as a facilitator, to create meaning with them. At the conclusion of the interview, I transcribed all audio files of interviews into written texts. To ensure the quality of these

transcripts, I checked the transcription against the audio file twice and then one of my co-advisors also reviewed the transcripts.

## **Methods of Analysis**

When analyzing the data, I conducted a form of critical content analysis using the framework of Design Justice. Kathy Short, in their work *Critical Content Analysis of Children's and Young Adult Literature*, provides an overarching definition of the methodology: “in critical content analysis, the researcher uses a specific critical lens as the frame from which to develop the research questions and to analyze the text” (5). Short then continues by identifying what a “critical” lens is by drawing on Paolo Freire, known as one of the founding fathers of critical pedagogy. Critical, in this context, is defined “as a stance of locating power in social practices in order to challenge conditions of inequity” (1). In addition to scanning the texts for principles, this form of analysis also requires the researcher to revisit how their understanding of the world may alter their understanding of the data. Friere argues that “Texts are never neutral... texts are also derived from particular perspectives... because of this positioning of the text and the reader, the perspectives of each should be questioned.” (Freire and Macedo). Essentially, a critical content analysis is analyzing a text for a specific theory that questions the power in each situation while also remembering that your position as a researcher may affect their analysis. For this project, I adopted the lens of Design Justice, which seeks to ensure all participating parties are given a voice in design instead of design being dictated by a select few, to analyze the situation of training at Community Corrections. I then endeavored to remember my position as an outsider of the system in order to consider how this position might impact my analysis.

### *Analysis of Interview Data*

The primary form of data in this thesis was interview data. To analyze this data, I built two separate coding tables: one that had six columns for the six components of Activity Theory and another to code for the tenets of Design Justice. After transcribing the audio files into written text, I went through each transcription to look for any statements that are aligned with the five themes derived from the principles of Design Justice (table 1). I also scanned the transcriptions for important information regarding training at Community Corrections that did not fit onto the original coding table. This data was placed in a separate table below the Design Justice Coding table for later analysis (table 1). I then proceeded to do a second-level coding analysis by looking for frequencies and general themes in the data. An example of a coded interview can be found in Appendix D. During this analysis, I noted which columns were the most populated and least populated and began to consider what implications these themes might have. Lastly, I explicitly connected the data to the principles of Design Justice to draft the implications of this data.

I also coded the interview transcriptions for the six elements of Activity Theory. As previously explained, this theory originated to understand what an activity is and the components that comprise an activity. There are six components to activity theory: The subject, the object, the resources, the rules, the community, and division of labor. A standard Activity Theory diagram can be found in the Activity Theory section of the Literature Review. As depicted, each element of an activity system is interconnected, indicating that when one component of the activity moves, the outcome of the activity is altered. In addition to examining a singular activity, activity theory has evolved to consider how activity systems also interact. To visualize this, please see figure 7: Interacting Activity Systems for Community Corrections in the Activity Theory portion of the literature review. This diagram shows the many organizations involved in

the outcome of Corrections and how changing the training not only changes that facility but has a ripple effect that influences other organizations. To code specifically for Activity Theory, I scanned each transcript for any of the six elements of activity. I then collected the raw data on a coding chart that can be seen in table 2. After completing the initial coding, I scanned the coding table for repeating themes. These themes will be discussed later in the Findings chapter. Overall, by utilizing the lens of Activity Theory, I was able to better understand the complex nature of Community Corrections and provide a secondary explanation for the data that considers the logistical needs of training.

Overall, the data analyzed for this research was derived from narrative interview data. An analysis of this data was done using the theories of Design Justice and Activity Theory. These frameworks allowed me to get a better understanding of the roles and impact of the Corrections environment, while also illuminating any alignment between training at Community Corrections and the principles of Design Justice. The following chapter holds the analysis of both document and interview data.

### **Limitations of Design**

While the research approach taken was most effective for the current work, I would like to acknowledge the limitations of this research approach. To recruit participants, I first had to contact the staff listed on Community Corrections websites. This was often the Executive Directors of the program. From there, administrators were very helpful in offering to share my interview request. Even with their assistance, my access to entry-level employees was more limited than my access to administrators, because entry-level employees' contact information was not readily available. Future research should strive to interview a balance of both high-level positions and entry-level positions. An additional limitation is that these interviews and the

coding of these interviews were done solely by me, meaning that the conclusions drawn are built only from my interpretation of the data. In future work, a team of researchers should be created to establish interrater reliability. Both the inability to contact all participants directly and the lack of a research team affect the transferability of the current work and should be reconsidered in future projects.

I would also like to acknowledge that, while Design Justice argues that all users of the system should be listened to during the designing process, the current thesis did not interview any clients, who are also users of this system. This is a result of limited opportunity to gain sufficient trust from both the IRB and Community Corrections to interview this vulnerable population. This was especially true because Institutional Review Boards consider clients of Community Correction to be incarcerated, making them even more vulnerable and so I was constrained in my ability to obtain permission to utilize clients as subjects. Future work should continue to build on the current study by interviewing clients of Corrections. As users of the system, client voices should be given equal value to the voices of staff.

### Table 1. Design Justice Coding

Design centers the voices of its users to break down hierarchies.	Design is a collaborative and ongoing process.	Design provides equal access to knowledge and tools.	Design must be sustainable for Community.	Design utilizes what is already working in a system before altering the system.
Relevant Raw Data that does not Fit in above Categories				

### Table 2. Activity Theory Coding Table

[illegible]

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

As stated in the introduction, many depictions of the justice system have suggested that this environment is strictly punitive. However, Community Corrections, as the last step before individuals reenter their community, is uniquely situated in that they are responsible for building agency in and actively communicating with those who have been incarcerated. This responsibility requires staff to be trained to interact with clients in a different capacity than would be possible in contexts of traditional incarceration. To better understand how this agency operates differently than the traditional prison environment, we can apply the lenses of Activity Theory and Design Justice to Community Corrections training. In doing so, Activity Theory illuminates the complex and rapidly changing Community Corrections environment that staff are both being trained in, while alignment with Design Justice principles can measure the relative success of training.

The aim of this chapter is then two-fold: to better understand the process of training by analyzing the interview data for the six components of Activity Theory and then to compare the interview data with the ten principles of Design Justice. By conducting this analysis, I intend to show how clearly defined training focused on the users of the system, as suggested by the previously mentioned theories, creates a more sustainable work environment for staff and a more positive living environment for clients.

### **Understanding the Activity**

In the United States, Activity Theory has primarily served to better understand interactions between subjects and the world. What follows is an analysis of the interview data using the lens of Activity Theory. Each subsection discusses one of the six different components



of Activity Theory (object, subject, community, rules, tools, and division of labor) to provide a more holistic picture of what the activity of Community Corrections training looks like before analyzing for the principles of Design Justice. To see all the components of the activity of Community Corrections training working together, please see figure 8.

### *Subject & Object*

Two of the first established components of Activity Theory are the object and the subject. These two factors are essential to the activity as they describe the purpose of the activity and who is engaged in the activity to accomplish said goal. I have chosen to combine these two elements of Activity Theory because of their intrinsic connection to each other. The connection between the subject and object, according to the work of first-generation Activity Theory scholars Vygotsky & Leontiev, is what forms the entire activity. Without one or more subject (s) interacting with the world to accomplish something, there is no activity. Without an object of study, there is also no activity. In the case of Community Corrections training, interview data suggests that the subject of the study is the staff member while the object of training is to teach staff how to successfully prepare a client for reentry into an unsupervised society:

- “We write them a case plan when they first come in. Work on their needs. Which is anything that ranges from criminal thinking to family/marital support, finances, their accommodations like helping them to find a place to live when they get out, saving up their money, budgeting really anything in their life to make them into productive citizens when they get out, basically.”
- “We found that when we were using more criminal justice language, we weren't getting the right candidates. So, when we post, we now talk about

reentry services specialists, because we get folks that are a little more person centered, a little less carceral in their sort of approach to things, and a lot more human.”

The data above, in addition to identifying the object of Community Corrections training, illuminates the goal of interacting with clients in a humane way. As described by the second excerpt, the nature of Community Corrections is not “carceral,” but is instead “person centered.” In order to accomplish this goal though, there must be substantial work done by both the staff and the clients. While it is the responsibility of staff to retain their training to aid their clients, it is also the responsibility of clients to begin to assume agency over their own lives, and therefore engage in the same work as staff members. This makes both the staff and clients the subjects of the larger Community Corrections activity even though staff are the focus of this study:

- “Here it's like you're interacting with people. You’re walking around with them. You're talking to them. They’re leaving the facility and coming back.”
- “We spend a lot of time doing root cause analysis with our participants. And I like to tell them I don't really care what you did as much as I care why you did it. And once we figure out why, then we can figure out what an appropriate response is going to be.”
- “We talk to clients too, so we can get their side and see what it is because depending on what it is, we want to look at their whole program not just one moment. And so, we are talking about are they in treatment and like how things are going. Did they use? Is this their first use or fifth use? Like what's happening with it. What did they say? Did they take accountability?”

Did they give us a fake story about coffee? Like, what did they tell us?

And so, with that, when we're doing staffing, the things that we look for as a team is risk and so we're evaluating is this too big a risk for themselves?"

Identifying the subjects of Community Corrections training also helps better understand the voices that should be listened to when crafting the design of training. As argued by Design Justice, which will be discussed in more detail later, it is individuals like staff members and clients, who are most impacted by the design of training that should be the ones responsible for designing training. We should also acknowledge though that there is a much larger community involved in the creation and implementation of training than just staff and clients.

### *Community*

Activity Theory defines community as the “people and groups whose knowledge, interests, stakes, and goals shape the activity” (Vahed, et al., 4). As previously described, the primary parties involved in Community Corrections training are the staff of Community Corrections and the clients of Community Corrections. However, besides these parties, there are many other stakeholders whose interests determine how staff at Community Corrections are trained. The larger community involved with Community Corrections was clearly identified by multiple interviewees:

- “You've got arresting officers, you might have a probation officer or a judge or a specialty court, maybe they're incarcerated in prison or jail. Then you have us, then you have their supervision when they go to non-residential...”
- “So, you have your therapist, your parole or probation officer for dual supervision, me and then them.”

Some also shared how disconnects in the larger community can affect the lives of both staff and clients:

We are really trying to coordinate and communicate with that whole system in a way that lets the human have a really seamless experience instead of what has maybe historically happened in the past, where people feel like they're starting over every time they go to a new spot in the system.

As described by the interviewee, it is imperative to not only recognize that there are outside stakeholders but also to unite these stakeholders through active communication to avoid any barriers to reentry. When communication is not maintained, clients and staff are often left confused and repeat steps of the process that have already been completed.

In addition to the larger community being identified, interviewees also shared how changes in the larger community can affect the activity:

For a long time, our facility was owned and operated by the county. We were simply renting it from them. In 2018, we purchased it from them. So, it's been a few years of us having ownership of the building and just really prioritizing where we're going to place that money and I've been part of overseeing that process.

This quote describes the process of changing ownership of the facility from the county to a non-profit organization. When this change occurred, the county was no longer considered a stakeholder in the facility, and therefore, the facility was allowed to alter the activity by redistributing finances and updating policies. Overall, the larger community involved in Community Corrections training, including but not limited to the county, the court systems, other policing agencies, and government agencies, are not directly involved in the training process but

do oversee it in that their interests guide how staff are being trained and the opportunities for professional development that are made available to staff.

### *Rules*

One-way stakeholders can be involved in the training process is by creating the rules and policies guiding all facilities. Activity Theory defines rules as the “laws, codes, conventions, customs, and agreements that people adhere to when engaging in the activity” (Vahed, et al., 4). The interview data suggests that there are two primary sets of rules that must be followed, the statutes and standards set by the state of Colorado, and the policies created by each individual facility. Examples of state standards include Title 17. This document, updated yearly by the state, outlines the statutes for any Community Corrections programs operated by units of local government, state agencies, or nongovernmental agencies. Topics range from the responsibilities of administration staff to how clients are selected to serve at a Community Corrections facility. In addition to this, each facility also has a guidebook of standards that dictate the responsibilities of staff in client management and facility safety. For example, this guidebook details how headcounts of the clients should be conducted, how client grievances should be handled, the intake process with new clients, and, most relevant to the current work, the requirements of staff training.

Looking specifically at training, this document states the program must have “written policies, procedures, and established practices” that are available to staff throughout the training process (34). It also establishes what staff are required to be trained on and how long the training period should last:

Staff members who have contact with clients shall receive training in evidence-based practices relevant to all of their job duties or assignments, and any other

topics deemed necessary to perform duties... IMPACT are staff who receive specialized training and coaching in the following areas: assessments, case planning, motivational enhancement, cognitive-behavioral approaches, skill building, and coaching... within 90 days of the staff member's first working day in a new position, all staff shall receive 40 hours of formal orientation at minimum. (34)

Last, this document also discusses the minimum requirements for professional development after a staff member's initial training, by stating that each employee should earn "40 hours of ongoing annual professional development" (34). When considering these requirements, it suggests there is little flexibility in the training at Community Corrections. With very little left at the discretion of the on-the-ground staff members, this document attempts to ensure that all staff receive equal amounts of effective training and training that is suited for their specific job responsibilities. Overall, when thinking about the rules that Community Corrections facilities are required to follow, we can see that training can become quite complex and allow little space for variation.

In fact, some interviewees felt the rules of this environment were so complex that they recommended a shadowing day for new hires *before* they sign their employment contracts. Each argued that this day would allow the new hire to experience the expectations of the job before agreeing to be trained for the position. Many shared, and I agreed, that they were surprised a day like this was not already in place due to the complex and high-stakes nature of Community Corrections work. This additional day would help ensure that staff understand the many rules that dictate this space and, in doing so, would improve the staff retention rate:

- "I think adding more of a screening process or being able to give them like a day, just kind of see how they do with something to where it's like we don't

waste our time and we don't waste their time and like, make them miserable when they're like, this is not what I expected, you know?"

- “Well, we need to honor and acknowledge that this work is not for everyone, right? And it's not judgmental. You know, I really don't want to be a plumber.”

This data begins to reveal the way the rules of an activity can complicate the activity. In case of Community Corrections, these facilities are offered very little freedom to train as they wish because so much of the training structure has already been determined by the statutes and standards of other stakeholders.

### *Tools*

Up to this point, all Community Corrections facilities have shared the subject, object, community, and some of the rules of an activity. That changes when considering the fifth component of Activity Theory, tools. Tools are defined as the “physical objects and systems of symbols, such as language, that people use to accomplish an activity” (Vahed, et al., 4). Some examples of tools identified by Community Corrections staff were money, time to train, training curriculum, and physical space to train. However, it is important to recognize that, when staff did mention tools of the activity, they almost solely were discussing lack of access to tools:

- “What is more the barrier is time in a 24/7 365 model, getting those longer training sessions, or those bigger trainings done? That is where our real barrier is. There are resources for free through the division of criminal justice or things we can access through the city or through the nonprofits, but it's really just finding time for people to be able to do that.”

- “I think it's something that they do offer, but they don't offer it all the time. So, I think that's also why we haven't had that training.”
- “I'll resource [staff] out to get training from maybe the experts of a certain thing, like the electronic home monitoring, to go to.”

From this data, we can speculate that Community Corrections facilities are often working with limited resources that constrict the activity of training. This is especially evident in the cases where staff simply aren't trained on a subject because of the lack of curriculum available or insufficient time to complete the training. In addition to there being a commentary on the general lack of resources available, some interviewees also questioned how their access to resources may differ from other facilities, arguing that “some institutions have easier access to training because of where they are based.” This interviewee elaborated on the fact that their facility is located in a more rural area and that their staff is often required to travel multiple hours to access in-person training seminars. Given the unpredictable weather of Colorado, the limited time of staff members, and the financial resources it takes to travel that distance, their location often leads to their staff not being able to access in-person training at all.

When looking at the tools subcomponent of Activity Theory, we can begin to see how correctional facilities may be centered around the same subjects, objects, communities, and rules, and yet still operate differently.

### *Division of Labor*

The last component of an activity is the Division of Labor, the way “work in the activity is split up among participants” to achieve the desired object (Vahed, et. al, 4). Dividing the labor is essential as it ensures that, first, no one party becomes overwhelmed with responsibility and, second, that no one person holds all the information, and therefore all the power. This is



especially important at Community Corrections when there are so many tasks that need to be completed to ensure the successful reentry of a client into unsupervised society. This importance was clear in the interview data:

- “Same thing for my staff, and that's why we have a really diverse team is because we really, no one person can hold all the information, right? I can't be an expert on seizure and stroke and substance use disorder and pregnancy and labor and delivery and maintenance and all of these... But none of those roles are less than, we do not function as a facility without any role, right? So really rethinking power, structure and dynamics and perception of people's roles, because there's no one that's unimportant.”
- “It affects us financially when we don't have case managers, you know? Without case managers like, unfortunately there wouldn't be any Community Corrections.”

This data emphasizes the importance of dividing labor to form a community among staff and to create the best living conditions for clients. This conclusion is also reflected in the fact that multiple interviewees discussed the many roles at Community Corrections and the importance of clearly defined and communicated divisions in labor:

- “It's tough at times because like my training case manager tells me to do something that his manager tells him to do. And then my manager and one of the other directors that I'm working with are all confused or irritated because they're like, why are you doing this?”
- “So, I kind of do a lot of everything. It's kind of willy-nilly right now because we have someone on leave right now so we're kind of just getting whatever on our caseloads right now.”

- “I’m just trying to do what I can without overstepping my supervisors but also being able to keep up with my own duties because I still have a caseload, so I can’t spend my whole week training and doing things because then I get behind.”

Without clear divisions of labor, staff are often left feeling overwhelmed and frustrated by the constantly shifting expectations and the sheer amount of work. In addition to this, some brought up the idea of a hierarchy, where efforts to improve are seen as “overstepping” the limits of some positions. While many did share this frustration, others felt like the haziness of those labor divides are a natural, expected part of the job:

- “When I was interviewing, my question back to them was, can you describe what a typical day looks like for you? No one. No one could even give me a grasp of that. They were just like well sometimes. Sometimes it’s this, but not really actually.”
- “Well, you never feel prepared because you never know what you’re walking into. Ever. I mean, yesterday we had a lady screaming in there, so you never know what you’re walking into.”
- “It’s really kind of like every day is a new day. And you know, sometimes you have a training thing set [up] and then something happens with a resident and that’s what you need to address first.”

Not only do these excerpts recognize the ever-shifting nature of the position, but they also acknowledge how this feature is reflected in training as well. Interviewees noted that training *can* be written down as a task list, but this often is not practical as situations are also happening in the moment and must be responded to. Because of this, training is not actually done based on a task list, but instead is adaptive based on the needs of the current moment. This approach can be seen as beneficial because it would emphasize the knowledge needed to complete the job, but by not

training based off a curriculum, staff may ultimately end up not trained or undertrained on some necessary topics. Interview data also suggested that staff expected the complexities of the position as they stated that, when your job is to manage the life of others, there will always be new experiences that no one has encountered before and you will have to respond the best way you can, in line with the policies that govern the facility. Overall, there is strong evidence that clearly divided labor expectations can be beneficial for staff members, but some staff counter the importance of division of labor, arguing that chaos is a natural part of this environment.

The above section has attempted to frame training at Community Corrections through Activity Theory to see the different pieces that make up the larger activity of training. To do this, I have presented evidence from interviews that identifies the importance of all six components of an activity. To see how all six of these components work and move together, please see figure 8. This diagram contains operationalized components of the activity with arrows that indicate how one part of the system may affect another part. Now that we have a better understanding of the activity, we can analyze the data through the lens of Design Justice to measure training's effectiveness.

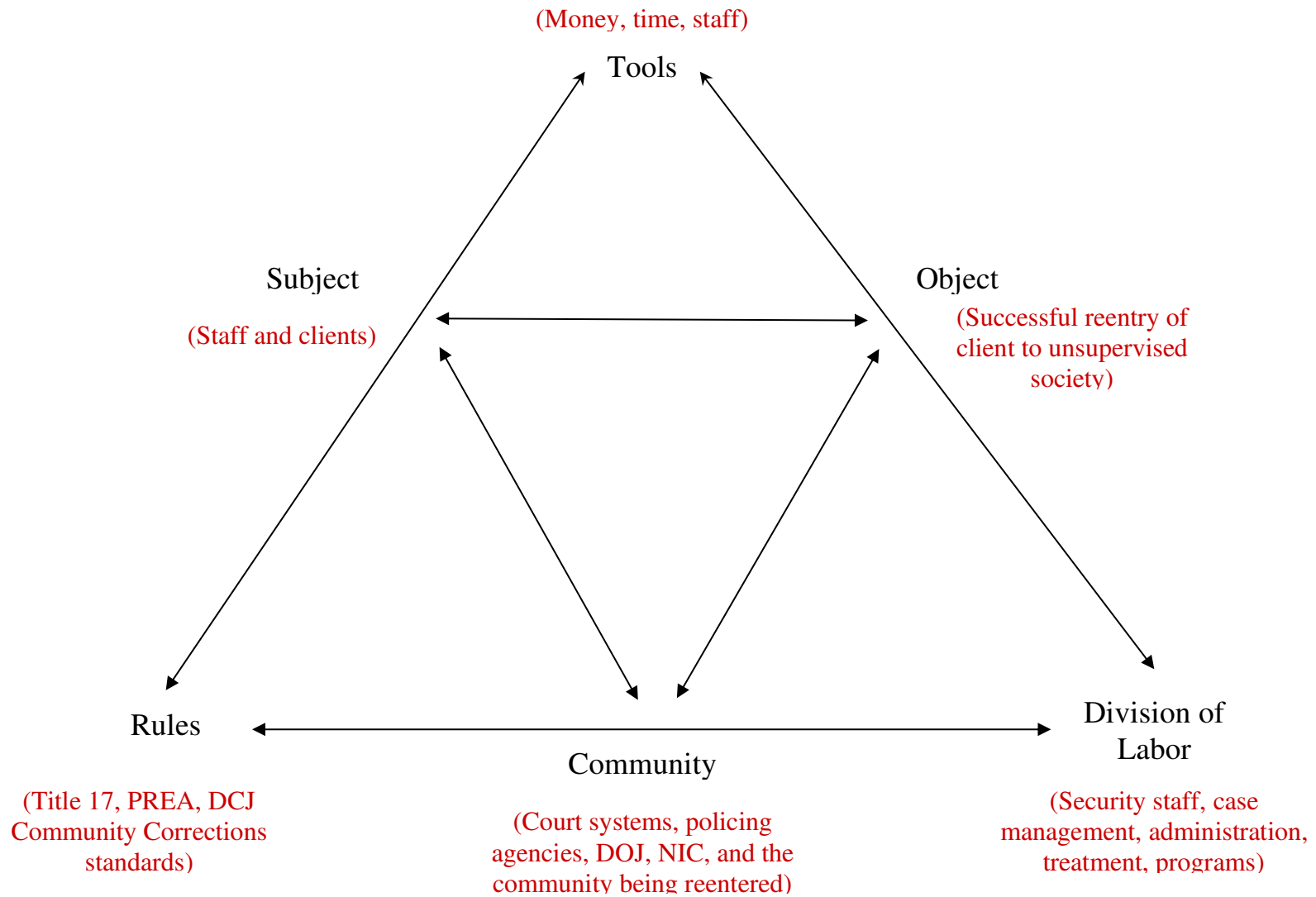


Figure 8. A 2nd generation Activity Theory diagram for the Training at Community Corrections

## **Alignment with DJ Principles**

In addition to analyzing training at Community Corrections through the lens of Activity Theory, we now move to consider what makes training the most effective by applying the framework of Design Justice to the analysis. What follows is an analysis of the data that aligned with the principles of Design Justice, indicating that the voices of the system's users were valued in the design process, leading to a more sustainable design for all subjects. I then follow this with an examination of the principles of Design Justice that Community Corrections did not align with.

### *Design Centers the Voices of the System*

To begin, I combined the first three principles of Design Justice. I chose to do this because each of these principles emphasizes the importance of listening to a system's users before designing anything for that system, including training. Again, the first three principles are:

Principle 1: We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems.

Principle 2: We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process.

Principle 3: We prioritize design's impact on the community over the intentions of the designer. (Design Justice Network)

To operationalize these three principles, I looked for interview data that suggested Community Corrections training centers and connects voices with differing power to reduce the effect of the hierarchy. What I found is that many interviewees who are trainers reflected on how they are attempting to reduce the impact of power structures by creating groups of peer mentors during the training process. These are people whom they could ask questions and provide feedback to:

- “Even if I feel like I'm the least scary person on the face of the planet, I still have a role that has all of those things that can increase people's stress level. Whereas having a peer to help them allows them to not be afraid to make mistakes, not to be afraid of being observed, right?”
- “I think just really slowing it down and also kind of checking in with all the new CMs and seeing what they're struggling with and how we can help them because you know, they probably find more errors and things than we do... I've implemented changes that the new case managers have noticed, and I know, and I've noticed that they appreciate that so much because you know, I think it shows them that they're doing a good job and we just want to help them and that their feedback is important.”
- “It depends on what their learning style is and what they're comfortable with, just because you can only absorb so much information especially in conversation. So, some like to do it where they do the meeting and one of us or someone is sitting there listening to help with questions they get stuck on. Other people would rather us sit in the back of the room. We record our meetings, we listen to the recording, we give them feedback. Or they can message us.”

This evidence suggests multiple ways that Community Corrections facilities are attempting to center the voices of their staff and the outcome of these attempts. The first is through the establishment of a group of peer mentors, as mentioned previously. This is depicted best in the first excerpt, where they note that there is very little they can do to change the power differentials, but instead connects new hires with their peers so that they have someone they feel comfortable reaching out to with questions or concerns. Another way training is centering the

voices of its users is identified by the third quotation, by adjusting to the learning styles of each trainee. While this may require more work on the part of the supervisor, this action also better ensures that staff are retaining the information provided during training and help staff feel more confident in their new positions. The full effect of actions like these is best suggested by the second excerpt. Again, staff feel more appreciated when their opinions are valued, but also are “probably find more no errors” than say someone in administration, who do not directly work with clients on a day-to-day basis.

Overall, applying the first three principles of Design Justice to interview data suggests that staff’s voices are highly valued in the implementation of training in order to make their work environment as sustainable as possible. This conclusion then leads to a larger conclusion: training is most effective when the structure of training reflects the principles of Design Justice. It appears that when we apply the first three components of Design Justice as a lens for evaluating overall effectiveness, that Community Corrections is doing a good job.

#### *Design is Collaborative and Ongoing*

A similar conclusion can be drawn when analyzing the data for the fourth and fifth principles of Design Justice, both of which suggest that design should be accessible to all engaged in the activity and should involve an ongoing process:

Principle 4: We view change as emergent from an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process, rather than as a point at the end of a process.

Principle 5: We see the role of the designer as a facilitator rather than an expert.

(Design Justice Network)

Like the first three principles, these two aid in dismantling of power in any activity as they suggest that all members of the activity should have access to the design at any given point. To

ensure this happens throughout staff's time at Community Corrections, many facilities utilize shadowing to train new hires. Shadowing is the process of one employee watching and mirroring another employee in order to learn tasks in a hands-on way. Like the above section, shadowing creates bonds between employees as they learn to rely on each other for assistance. Additionally, it creates a comfortable environment for employees to voice concerns or share feedback that can be used to redesign training. Because shadowing has both effects, it is collaborative, in that you are working with others to become fully trained, and it's ongoing because those individuals will be the same that you work with each day, meaning that there is a constant sense of support for staff members as new situations arise. The importance of alignment with the fourth and fifth principles of Design Justice are best seen in the following quotes:

- “We do have, you know, multiple positions and so they kind of lean on each other. And so, the internal person can kind of guide that person and they're learning the case management stuff together... We give them enough training that they could start off with they're not going to have all the answers and we encourage our staff to give yourself some grace, because you're going to have questions.”
- “We also want to start building some internal coaches, and not that they're formal roles or like absolute perfect subject matter experts, but folks who showed an interest in an area, really having an opportunity to support their peers, their colleagues around development in those areas.”
- “The support probably helped me feel the most prepared, knowing that I wasn't on my own.”



These excerpts show the emphasis placed on collaborative and ongoing training in the unpredictable environment of Community Corrections. As with alignment with the first three principles, when the design of training aligns with the fourth and fifth principles that staff feel supported and confident in their role, suggesting that they are well-trained.

*Design values Previous Experience when crafting Solutions*

In addition to the above, there was also strong alignment with the sixth and tenth principles of Design Justice:

Principle 6: We believe that everyone is an expert based on their own lived experience, and that we all have unique and brilliant contributions to bring to a design process.

Principle 10: Before seeking new design solutions, we look for what is already working at the community level. We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices. (Design Justice Network)

Essentially, these two principles emphasize the importance of insider knowledge that was introduced in the first five principles. When operationalizing these principles, I coded for the ways Community Corrections training values the previous experience of trained employees when creating new design solutions. There was overwhelming evidence to suggest that previous experience guides many of the decisions in the Community Corrections environment. This can primarily be seen through the internal movement that over three-fourths of interviewees shared having, meaning that they started in a department and then were internally moved to a different department. Staff traditionally started as a Community Corrections Specialist, were promoted to a leader position in this department, then moved to Case Management, where some were then promoted again:

- “Honestly, just the years of experience. At that point I'd been here 17 years.”
- “But like I said, I have also been working here for a year. So, I knew the systems, I knew the clients. I felt like I was more prepared because I was working here previously. So, I feel like somebody coming in that does not know the systems like that I think would need a lot more training than the four weeks.”
- “I think it's just a very complex system and sometimes coming from the outside into a high-level position like management is a very difficult transition. It looks a little bit easier to work your way from the bottom to the top.”

While these are only three excerpts, as mentioned previously, 19 of the interviewees shared that they had moved internally within the institution in some way. This suggests that Community Corrections turns to its current staff members to occupy positions of power, and therefore relies on these staff to bring about change, before looking at external candidates. This helps the facility in that people in positions of power have experienced what new hires and other staff may be experiencing and ensures that they are extremely familiar with the structure of the Community Corrections activity. Internal hiring also makes it where ‘new’ hires do not necessarily need as much training as an external hire would. Multiple interviewees said that, when promoted, they were able to skip the first couple days of the training program as it covered topics that they had learned in their previous position. It also appears that, when hired internally, staff felt more confident in their position. However, some argued that Community Corrections’ reliance on previous experience can lead to inadequate training and resistance towards new ideas. This

complication will be discussed in the Implications chapter of the current work.

In conclusion, a significant portion of interviewees started in the lower levels of Community Corrections and were promoted multiple times internally, which helped them feel more comfortable in a position of power and made them more approachable by other staff. It is assumed in the sixth principle of Design Justice that the staff members who are promoted internally would use their prior experiences to make improvements to the current system (Design Justice Network). Overall, from the excerpts above and as Design Justice argues, internal promotion is the primary way that Community Corrections relies on the value of previous experience and further supports the conclusion that prior experience should be consciously used when designing for this environment.

*Design is Successful when it is Sustainable for the Users of the System*

Alignment with all the above principles allows for a sustainable work environment, wherein sustainability is represented by a high staff retention rate and by processes that honor the community as an ecosystem of its own. The idea of sustainability is reflected in the eighth and ninth principles of Design Justice:

Principle 8: We work towards sustainable, community-led and -controlled outcomes.

Principle 9: We work towards non-exploitative solutions that reconnect us to the earth and to each other. (Design Justice Network)

Coding specifically for sustainability illuminated that discussions about how to make the job sustainable were frequent in this training environment. This was explicitly stated by multiple interviewees:

- “One of the things I've learned is a breakdown of what you spend your time on. That would be beneficial to teach in some sort of training. Like 50% of your time needs to be on staff, 80% of your time to be on clients, that needs to be a major focus.”
- “So, my biggest things are time management and knowing that you do have facility tasks that need to be done, but you also could be in the dayroom, and you need to be available for our clients.”

These quotes suggest that sustainability, anything that contributes to long-term viability for the employee and the cultural health of the Community Corrections environment, is primarily being addressed by teaching time management skills. Given the complexity of the activities involved in Community Corrections, as depicted earlier, it would be reasonable to assume that burnout could occur easily, especially when also considering the constantly shifting responsibilities of staff. Therefore, there appears to be a strong belief that if time management is mastered, staff will be better able to allocate their time and energy to ensure that all necessary tasks are completed. It is also important to acknowledge that multiple staff members shared a particular complaint, that the message of time management and, ultimately, sustainability is not always being successfully maintained leading me to believe the current focus on time management is not effective. This was described in detail in one interview specifically:

The retention rate I think all starts honestly from training. It's like a revolving door. We hire all the case managers and then, you know, we give them six months. And by the time they reach six months, they're so overwhelmed. They're so behind, they still don't know what they're doing. And then they quit because they're like, I suck at my job, I'm stupid, you know, nobody cares about me.

Nobody's helping me. Like, I suck at my job. And so, then they quit, and then we're back to, we have no case managers and then we start again.

This statement, and others with a similar message, recognizes that burnout is very much an issue in this environment despite strong training approaches in most areas as measured by Design Justice standards. This point also suggests a need for some alterations to the training curriculum to find better ways to support new employees toward a sustainable approach to their work. Further exploration, including other methods of teaching sustainability besides time management, will be discussed in the following chapter. While some contradiction does exist, evidence generally suggests that sustainability is currently a large focus at Community Corrections. Increases in sustainability, however, will lead to higher staff retention rates, and be indicative of more effective training and a healthier overall work environment.

The above section has analyzed the interview data using the lens of Design Justice. In doing so, I have attempted to show how alignment with the principles of Design Justice suggest the qualities associated with stronger, more effective training. With this being the case, it is important to note that in this study Community Corrections training strongly aligned with nine of the ten principles of this theory which shows the strength of the current system.

### **Data Unaligned with Design Justice**

As previously mentioned, after coding for both Activity Theory and Design Justice, I looked at the areas that were left blank on the coding charts. An area with no data indicates that Community Corrections did not align with the principles of Design Justice, and, therefore, suggests space for Community Corrections to grow. Out of all ten principles, there was only one principle that had very little data associated with it: principle seven relating to equal access to tools and knowledge. There was also interview data that was important to understanding training,

but that did not fit in either coding chart. I conducted a thematic analysis on this data and have used it to identify areas where the theory of Design Justice may need to grow to adapt to the work happening at Community Corrections and perhaps at other locations as well. The following section will first look at the lack of alignment with the seventh principle and follow with an analysis of the relevant data that did not fit into either coding regimen.

### *Equal Access to Tools and Knowledge*

The seventh principle of Design Justice argues that all users of the system should have equal access to the tools and knowledge of design. Operationalized, this means that the staff of Community Corrections would all have been equally trained, have ways to access their training after its completion, and an understanding of *why* training is structured the way it is. Multiple interviewees argued that this wasn't happening in their current facilities:

- “So, I think, you know, judging somebody on their experience specifically for case management is hard to do because it's you know a tough job for everyone.”
- “You know, we kind of just got hired or promoted and then kind of had to navigate that situation... I kind of had to fend for myself and train myself.”
- “Not really, because they did kind of start me when I was working downstairs, like when I was on a day shift, I was working weekends up there. There really wasn't much training for that. It was just kind of learning as you go a little bit.”
- “Yeah, so I was I think the first one also within over a decade to be hired as a case manager externally. So, there was a lot of, I think we had a lot of learning curves, and we like updated our FTO program because I was here.”

This data suggests that by not providing equal training for all staff, some are entering positions that they feel very unprepared for. This leads to them being forced to seek out their own training, which not only is rarely comprehensive but also places more work on often already overworked employees. This unequal training seems to occur whether staff have been promoted internally or hired as an external candidate, revealing a need to modify the training in a way that ensures all new hires, whether internal or external candidates, should follow more formalized training practices. Some interviewees began to identify ways training at Community Corrections could adapt to respond to this issue:

- “Definitely like how-tos or like checklists I think are really beneficial especially when a lot of the time in your office by yourself, you don't have somebody looking over you. So, it's always good to have something to look back to and kind of be able to figure it out yourself instead of just looking at it being like I don't even know how to do this, I don't know where to start.”
- “We use sticky notes and try to give explanations and things, just that's how kind of things work for me... We give our team consistent feedback so that they're understanding of it, and they expect it and they're aware of what we're seeing. So, we do comprehensive interviews, we do every three months or every quarter. There shouldn't be anything that I would put on any active case that we haven't already talked about.”

These excerpts suggest that by giving staff more access to the tools of design, training curriculum and constant explanations, staff will feel more prepared for their roles. These documents give something for staff to refer to in times of newness and uncertainty, instead of forcing them to find their own answers. By giving access to the tools of design, responsibility is

removed from the new hire to train themselves and more consistent training is being provided as everyone is working from the same resources. The following chapter will also discuss the use of web-based materials that can be updated instantly and more accessible than physical copies. In addition to sharing documents that detail the design of training, interviewees also suggested the incorporation of cross-training to provide staff with more equal knowledge:

- “I’m fortunate enough that I sometimes do work in the main office. I pick up shifts, you know, for overtime and stuff. So, I get it, you know, I can see how being security, you know, if a case manager makes a mistake with a pass, security is the first person that’s going to get yelled at. So, I can see it’s frustrating for security when there’s new case managers and they don’t totally know what they’re doing.”
- “We do really like to have that cross shadowing just in the fact that case managers and security staff are two separate teams and they bumped heads.”
- “We do it so that everybody gets an understanding of what the clients have to look at basically and so they can have understanding like if the site has a question who’s also direct them to also, they might have some answer, a little bit of an answer for them rather than talk to their case manager.”

Here, cross training allows for staff to be exposed to multiple roles and gain a better understanding of the whole Corrections environment. As seen in all the above quotations, this appears to relieve frustration when things do not go as planned because they understand why the problem occurred, but also gives them more compassion towards fellow staff members that are not in their department and breaks down barriers to communication, forming a more cohesive work environment for all. For example, if a case manager is frustrated that their client is not on



time for their weekly meeting but walks out to a security desk with an extremely long line, they can help filter clients through to help get everyone where they need to be. Through small changes like increasing cross training, we can create a better work environment is created for staff, clients would also experience better living conditions as they would have a team of staff that are constantly communicating with each other to support their reentry.

Overall, Community Corrections showed strong alignment with all but one principle, principle seven that advocates for staff to have equal access to tools and knowledge. Interview data suggests that equal access to tools is not available because not all staff, specifically those hired internally, are receiving the same training as those hired externally. This is leading to gaps in knowledge and placing the responsibility on staff to seek out their own training. As a response, interviewees suggested that staff should be given training materials to keep in their office to refer to and be cross trained in multiple departments to better understand the Corrections environment. In the following chapter, I will also provide solutions I see to help Community Corrections better align with this principle.

### *Doing the Best We Can*

As previously identified, because Community Corrections so closely aligns with Design Justice principles, it can be viewed as effective training. While I have previously identified the one area where training did not align, I would also like to acknowledge that this lack of alignment may be a result of the activity of Corrections. Corrections is an industry responsible for managing the life of anyone who walks in the door. These individuals come in with different backgrounds, risk factors, criminal histories, and in different mindsets, making work with every client different. Additionally, Community Corrections staff are hired without expectation of any previous experience or education. The complex nature of the Corrections environment, which

may not be adequately addressed due to these limitations, was described by multiple interviewees:

- “I'm just trying to do what I can without overstepping my supervisors but also being able to keep up with my own duties because I still have a caseload, so I can't spend my whole week training and doing things because then I get behind.”
- “But what that also means is that there's not a lot of evidence or literature that directly describes what we are doing here and the best ways to do that.”
- “It's really kind of like every day is a new day. And you know, sometimes you have a training thing set [up] and then something happens with a resident and that's what you need to address first.”

The above evidence demonstrates how Community Corrections is unable to entirely align with Design Justice principles because of the volatile and rapidly changing environment. For example, the last excerpt clearly argues that it is not possible to follow a written training plan that staff can then carry with them as what staff get trained on is determined by the current moment. Additionally, the first quotation shows how the Design Justice principles are unable to accommodate for the hierarchy at Corrections, mandated by legal documents such as Title 17. Essentially, these quotations argue that Community Corrections is adapting to the principles of Design Justice as closely as possible, but the boundaries of the activity limit the change that can be made. As a response, I argue that the Design Justice Principles should be updated to consider the components of Activity Theory. This suggestion will be discussed in detail in the next chapter of this thesis.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

To do a detailed examination of the training structure and effectiveness of Community Corrections I have utilized the frameworks of Activity Theory and Design Justice. While Activity Theory gives us a better understanding of the current activity of training, Design Justice allows us to begin to understand the effectiveness of training. This analysis suggests several strengths within the current system through alignment with Design Justice principles, indicating that Community Corrections training currently is highly effective. The only area where the need for further Community Corrections growth was suggested was in principle seven, which argues for equal access to the tools and knowledge of design. The data also indicates ways that the theory of Design Justice needs to grow to capture the work happening at Community Corrections. Specifically, Design Justice needs to adapt to consider the boundaries of an activity, moving Design Justice from being ideal to being attainable by all institutions. The next chapter will suggest ways that both Design Justice and Community Corrections can grow in more detail.

## CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

### **Summarizing Findings**

As argued in the previous chapter, Activity Theory can serve to better understand how training is currently structured at Community Corrections. We can then use the tenets of Design Justice to evaluate that training's effectiveness. However, as stated at the end of the chapter, the interview data also complicated the application of Design Justice as Design Justice was unable to capture how Community Corrections is limited by the boundaries of the activity. In addition to this, there was one area of growth repeatedly brought up by interviewees: staff at Corrections are requesting more formalized training that is accessible throughout their employment. The following chapter will suggest modifications to the principles of Design Justice and to the process of training at Community Corrections, so that both can continue to grow moving forward. Lastly, I will also conclude the current thesis by stating the limitations of the research and providing concluding thoughts.

### **Growing the Theory of Design Justice**

While the principles of Design Justice did heavily align with training at Community Corrections, the principle they did not align with was somewhat unattainable in the Corrections environment. Essentially, Design Justice failed to consider the potential limits of those designing, such as the rules staff are required to follow, and the resources staff are working with that would prevent them from being able to share tools and knowledge with all staff. From the data, it appears that evaluating training is most effective when the lenses of Activity Theory and Design Justice are combined because we are then able to see the boundaries of the activity before seeking to change the activity. Because of this, I would like to suggest a series of modifications

to the principles of Design Justice, ushering in a second generation: Design Justice 2.0. This update aims to bring institutions like Community Corrections closer to the ideal of Design Justice, as they will be able to apply the tenets without being asked to make changes to the things outside of their control. What follows is a detailed description of the Design Justice 2.0 principles. Each section is labeled with the principle of Design Justice in question, followed by the reworded principle, and, finally, an explanation of the changes I have selected to make. I have chosen to not reword two principles, principles five and nine. Those principles have been excluded from this chapter but can be found in the second chapter of this thesis.

### *Principle 1*

**We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek [strive for] liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems [with acknowledgement of the mandatory rules that dictate the activity].**

The first change that I have made to the principle one is that I have taken out the word seek and replaced it with the term strive for. As defined by Merriam-Webster, seek means “to resort to,” while striving for recognizes the effort required by those working in Corrections to liberate themselves from the larger, oppressive justice system. In addition to changing the word seek, I have also amended the ending of this principle to recognize the lack of control staff have over the policies and rules that dictate the activity of Community Corrections. As outlined in the Findings chapter of this thesis, documents like Title 17 and the state of Colorado statutes are created at the macro level, making them inaccessible to Corrections employees, but these documents still extensively detail how a Community Corrections facility must be operated. The hope is that this new wording will acknowledge the constraints endemic to the Community Corrections activity.

### *Principle 2*

**We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process [through the use of constant feedback that moves upwards to those hired to design].**

As explained in the paragraph above, oftentimes there is a barrier between those who created the design and those who must experience the design due to the rules of Community Corrections. This makes it where administration does not have the option to allow entry-level staff to design. However, Community Corrections has found a way to place staff voices at the forefront of design, while respecting the mandatory roles of employees set up through legal standards: constant feedback. Interview data suggested that the feedback of staff is extremely valued and constantly requested in order to give more relevant feedback to those who are designing. Essentially, the feedback can travel through the chain of command to make staffs' opinion known, instead of expecting them to meet with individuals at the macro level that are rarely accessible without tremendous effort. By amending the second principle of Design Justice in this way, I aim to more specifically define how voices of users are placed at the forefront of design when the design is inaccessible.

### *Principle 3*

**We prioritize design's impact on the ~~community~~ [subjects of the activity] over the intentions of the designer.**

Here, in principle three, I have elected to make a small change, but one that will clarify who should be involved in design. Because Design Justice 2.0 combines the lenses of Activity Theory with Design Justice, we must consider what the word community means in Activity Theory. Community is defined as "people and groups whose knowledge, interests, stakes, and

goals shape the activity” (Vahed, et al., 4). I have previously, in both the Review of Literature and Findings chapters of this thesis, argued that the community in Corrections is comprised of court systems, policing agencies, the Department of Justice, the National Institute of Corrections, and the community being reentered by the client. However, these individuals are not always the ones directly impacted by training. By using the word “subjects” instead, the reworded principle prioritizes design’s impact on those most involved with the design, employees and clients of Community Corrections.

#### *Principle 4*

**We view change as emergent from an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process [, with respect to the limited resources available to the users], rather than as a point at the end of a process.**

While it would be ideal for the design of training to be accessible to everyone, that is often not an option in the Corrections space because of the limited resources and tools. To make design accessible and collaborative, you need money, time, and the staff: three resources that many institutions, including Community Corrections, are currently struggling to find. The new wording of this principle pays respect to the limitations of Community Corrections and, ultimately, makes Design Justice more accessible, as it again acknowledges that staff can only change so much of the training process before they are stopped by the logistical elements of design.

#### *Principle 6*

**We believe that everyone is an expert based on their own lived experience, [whether these individuals are community insiders or not] ~~and that~~. We [believe] all [individuals]**

**have unique and brilliant contributions to bring to a [that should be respected throughout] design process.**

As seen in the analysis of the interview data, some staff shared that when hired externally or while in the new hire phase, they felt that they were overstepping their role when trying to make change. This may arise from the fact that Community Corrections does so much internal hiring. While internal hiring does show that Corrections strongly values prior experience in the field, too much of an emphasis on prior experience can lead to a closed system, one that does not invite outsiders to join their community. To address this, I have reworded the sixth principle to state that all prior experience, whether in Community Corrections or not, should be welcomed and valued throughout the design process. My hope is that this change will keep the emphasis on prior lived experiences while also preventing Corrections from becoming a completely closed system. Essentially, the new language of this principle aims to create an open space for all users of the system, instead of only the voices of seasoned staff.

#### *Principle 7*

**We share design knowledge and tools with our communities [as allowed by the rules that dictate the activity].**

Like the first principle, the rules of this activity, such as Title 17 and the state of Colorado standards, dictate who is allowed access to certain knowledge and tools. While Community Corrections is and should continue actively working towards more equal access, as argued later in this chapter, staff is ultimately limited by the rules they must follow that come from the macro level.



### *Principle 8*

**We work towards [policy changes that allow for more] sustainable, community-led and -controlled outcomes.**

The change to the eighth principle recognizes that, while on-the-ground staff at Community Corrections can actively work towards sustainable design, it is ultimately changes in policy at the macro level that result in long-term changes to the system. Again, staff at Community Corrections are required to follow so many standards that there is little flexibility in design until those policies are modified. Therefore, this new wording suggests that changes should be made to the policies that govern this space that place the power to adapt training back with on-the-ground staff members, instead of individuals who work for government institutions.

### *Principle 10*

**Before seeking new design solutions, we look for what is already working at the community level. We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices. [However, this does not prevent us from allowing others to join the community or from valuing outsiders' prior lived experiences.]**

Like principle six, this change ensures that institutions like Community Corrections do not become closed, where no outside voices are allowed in. Through this change, I hope to acknowledge that those without Community Corrections experiences still have had other life experiences that can benefit the Corrections environment. Valuing these voices does not subtract from the value of Community Corrections experience. The new wording instead suggests a balance: a space where we value the work already taking place and the seasoned employees doing this work, but we also seek new opinions from those with other lived experiences.

## *Conclusion*

So far in this chapter, I have offered a modification to the current Design Justice principles, labeling these revised principles as Design Justice 2.0. Design Justice 2.0 changes the original principles by acknowledging the limits of the activity when thinking about change to the system. This not only benefits Community Corrections by making alignment with Design Justice more attainable but could also be applied to other institutions that also must follow strict rules and are granted few resources. The following section will move to think about how Community Corrections can also continue to grow to better align with Design Justice principles, ultimately making training more effective.

### **Improving Training at Community Corrections**

Before beginning this section, I would again like to recognize the admirable work currently happening at Community Corrections. Out of the ten principles of Design Justice, interview data suggested that Community Corrections is already aligning with nine principles. This strong alignment indicates just how strong and effective the current training program is. With that being said, it is important to maintain the growth mindset and look for new ways to continue to improve. Because of this, I would like to examine the one principle that there was very little evidence for: equal access to the tools and knowledge of design.

As argued in the Findings chapter of the current thesis, interviewees did identify some ways that Community Corrections can grow to provide more equal access. The two primary suggestions were that staff be given access to training material throughout their employment at Corrections and that staff be cross trained in multiple departments. Looking first at providing staff training material, this can be as easy as giving every staff member a physical or virtual copy of all training materials that they can refer to. In the Correctional environment, it may be more

practical to provide web-based materials that can be updated frequently given how often quickly Community Corrections can change. The small act of giving them access to this material allows staff to feel more confident in their roles and allows them more time to analyze the guidelines as they wish. Giving staff access can lead to more feedback from staff, ultimately creating a more effective training program. The second suggestion offered by staff is that they be cross trained in multiple departments at Community Corrections. Specifically, case managers shared the desire to be knowledgeable on the responsibilities of the Community Corrections specialist, while specialists shared being unsure of what case managers do. The implementation of cross-training would benefit the Corrections environment in two ways. The first, which was addressed in the findings section, is that staff do not feel as frustrated when problems arise outside of their department as they have a better understanding of why the problem might have happened. If they understand the problem, there is also a better chance they can contribute to a solution. The second way cross-training benefits Community Corrections is that it creates bonds between the departments, growing each employee's circle of peer mentors leading to a more sustainable work environment. From the two wonderful solutions offered by interviewees, we can see how some staff are already working towards increased access to the tools and knowledge of design.

In addition to this, I would like to offer a third solution that was hinted at by interviewees but never explicitly stated. Not only do some staff not have access to the tools of design, but there is also another subject in training whose voice should be valued throughout the designing process: the clients. As argued in the previous chapter, clients are a critical part of the activity of training as they are the reason for Community Corrections itself. They are the object and the main beneficiaries of better training. This would indicate that their voices should be included, but no interview data suggested that clients have been asked their opinions on interactions with the

staff. Instead, when clients do have an issue, they request a grievance form and staff address the specific incident recorded. I would like to propose heavier incorporation of client voices into the training process. To do this, Community Corrections could place bulletin boards on the wall with tape next to where clients can share thoughts and connect with each other and staff members. I saw this suggestion at work when I visited one of facilities interviewed for this project. Right inside the facility, administration had placed a bulletin board with each staff member's name listed and a binder clip beneath. At any point, clients are welcome to attach notes for any staff member and can request to leave a note for a fellow client. This minor, low-cost change begins to eliminate barriers to communication, allowing clients to be more involved in their environment. This initiative could also be paired with placing anonymous suggestion boxes around the facility with paper and pens placed next to it. Like the bulletin board, this gives clients space to provide feedback to staff members that should be taken into consideration when updating the training curriculum. Unlike the bulletin board, an anonymous suggestion box is a private space where clients can feel comfortable sharing more sensitive information. If these boxes were sorted through, even just once a week, clients would feel more valued, and staff may be given helpful ideas that they never considered.

Overall, while Community Corrections is currently providing effective training, as suggested by strong alignment with Design Justice principles, they must continue to find ways to grow to better support their staff and clients. The above section has proposed three changes that could have a significant impact: giving staff constant access to training materials, cross-training staff in multiple departments, and finding ways to incorporate the clients of Community Corrections more heavily in the training process.

## **Moving the Research Forward**

The above chapter has explained how both the theory of Design Justice and Community Corrections can continue to grow. As these areas continue to grow, research should grow with them. Future research should not only address the limitations listed in the methodology chapter of this thesis but should also replicate the coding process of the above work to ensure that the revised principles offered in this chapter continue to be an effective measurement for the relative success of training for multiple Community Corrections facilities. This work, as previously argued, should be conducted, and valued by scholars of community literacy in the field of rhetoric and composition as it aims to expand our understanding of community.

In the meantime, I have attempted to ensure that the current thesis benefits Colorado Community Corrections facilities by creating a second, shorter infographic that operationalizes the implications of this research to the Corrections environment. Within this tool, there is a list of the revised principles of Design Justice and five, practical ways to implement these principles. This document, entitled *A Measure of Effective Staff Training in the Corrections Environment*, is Appendix E. My hope is that this document provides a more accessible way to guide staff of Community Corrections through the current research so that they can see the benefits of applying these principles to their facilities and, in doing so, move the current research into practice. To circulate this document, I used a reverse snowballing process. I emailed the document to those I had interviewed with and asked them to circulate the document as they felt appropriate. The circulation process used here is one attempt to move the research forward but should be partnered with more research in the future.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

At the beginning of this thesis, I established four research questions that probe how the lenses of Activity Theory and Design Justice can be operationalized to analyze the Community Corrections environment. As demonstrated throughout the work, I believe the combination of these two lenses can be used to understand what training currently is and to identify areas where improvement can still be made. It is my hope that this thesis aids the field of rhetoric and composition by exposing us to the relevance of Community Corrections as a site of literacies that are little understood in the culture at large and are worthy of further exploration, so that we can learn from professionals in the field who are attempting to engage in just practices yet are constrained by their circumstances. In addition to this, I hope that the creation of this document will serve the staff of Community Corrections, who generously allowed me to enter their space and conduct research with them, alongside them, in the hope that by working together we create a better tomorrow for all of us.

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## APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

1. When and how did you come to Community Corrections? What is your current role at Community Corrections?
2. Describe your experience going through training at Community Connections.
3. Did you feel prepared to enter your job position at the end of your training period? Why or why not?
4. Are you involved in the creation or implementation of training at Community Corrections? If so, how?
5. What are some things that you think would improve your training experiences with Community Corrections? What suggestions do you have for future training of staff like yourself?

# SHARE YOUR COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS EXPERIENCE

I would like to invite all staff of Community Corrections to participate in a research project about Community Corrections. I am interested in learning more about the role that Community Corrections has played in your life and the training you received to prepare you for your position. This research will take the form of individual interviews.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

- Interviews will not take more than 60 minutes of your time.
- You may stop the interview at any time
- Interviews will be recorded, but not shared.
- Permission to use your responses for masters degree research will be requested.

## WHO CAN JOIN?

- Employees of Community Corrections
- Over the age of 18 and English-speaking


## WHEN & WHERE?

- Interviews will be held in a private room at CommCorr
- Initial interviews will be from Feb. 2022–July 2023

## BENEFITS:

You will be able to use your voice to suggest improvements for Community Corrections. These changes will then create a better work and living environment for all.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at (214)600-1899 or [mddunlap@colostate.edu](mailto:mddunlap@colostate.edu). You may also contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Sue Doe, at [sue.doe@colostate.edu](mailto:sue.doe@colostate.edu).



Colorado State University



## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CHART

<i>Location 1</i>	<i>Location 2</i>	<i>Location 3</i>	<i>Location 4</i>	<i>Location 5</i>	<i>Location 6</i>	<i>Location 7</i>	<i>Location 8</i>	<i>Location 9</i>
Evaluator	Criminal Justice Office	Program Director	Director	Director	Operational Development Assistant	Case Manager	Director of Operations	Case Manager Team Lead
Case Manager	Case Management Supervisor	Case Management Supervisor			Human Resources Generalist			
Executive Director at Criminal Justice Alternatives	Manager/CIT	Community Corrections Specialist Supervisor			Human Resources Director			
Training Coordinator	Community Resources Specialist	Community Corrections Specialist- Intern			Operations Director			
	Case Manager Team Lead				Executive Director			
	Executive Director							
	Hiring/Training Coordinator							

## APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF CODED TRANSCRIPT

kind of thing, it kind of followed what worked for me and what didn't work for me. So a lot of like just kind of the Corrections and things like that were stuff I learned from my supervisor and that kind of thing as I was going through things. And so I've kind of go off of those things. I also was like an RA in school and was a coach in high school. Coaching people is what I'm good at, so kind of working on those things and like asking my staff for feedback and that kind of thing and asking them a lot of questions on what they like to do. With being a case manager, you kind of learn about teaching people to, because you're working on case plans and coping skills and using criminogenic needs and that kind of stuff, so some of that can be used with staff. We talked about motivational interviewing. Clearly that works with clients and staff alike and so kind of using that style and things. Mike and I have really worked hard the last few years to kind of be more open to like different training and that kind of stuff. Not that we were closed off before, just being more active about trying to diversify things. So we've been doing coaching sessions for our staff and so we meet with them once a month for an hour to do whatever they need to do. It can be feedback. It can be working on a skill. They just need help with something like 'hey can you help me catch up on these things'. Sure. And you just kind of have that open communication, so that they're comfortable asking for help and having that more growth mindset to things which ultimately makes a better staff overall. Yeah. And so, like, we give feedback as it comes up. We use sticky notes and try to give explanations and things, just that that's how kind of things work for me. But if it needs to be like a sit down we work on it together thing, Mike and I are absolutely willing to do that and so we just kind of adjust to our team. We realized the last year or so especially a little more post COVID we're also getting newer generations in and so those are also changes. We recently switched to a four-ten schedule about a year ago for our case managers just because we do found that they're trying to do overtime to help discourage the other side. And so then they're using their time off to kind of get more hours in which is helping us out and other sites and that kind of thing. So we want them to still have the rest time. Also it just hard to get a lot done and at the end of the day, our staff wants... They will work hard when they're here, but they want to relax when they're gone. And so having three days to do that and just working those 10s really help. We've had some like trial and error with that. And so we had to like make a final decision with the team last month. Like, do you feel like this is working or what does that look like? And so with

## APPENDIX E: DOCUMENT MADE FOR CIRCULATION

### A MEASURE OF EFFECTIVE STAFF TRAINING IN THE CORRECTIONS ENVIRONMENT

Staff training at Community Corrections offers valuable opportunities to increase learning, workplace communication, and interpersonal relationships. Because of the implications of training, it is then important to ensure training in these facilities is effective. To measure the effectiveness of training, we can utilize the theory of Design Justice. The theory of Design Justice is built around a set of ten principles that explicitly state that users of a system are the most knowledgeable informants about that system. This theory even goes so far as to say that for a system to ever truly be just, it must be built by the users of that system by arguing that “Wherever there is a problem, there are already people acting on the problem in some fashion” (Allied Media Project). However, through my thesis work, I found that the original ten principles of Design Justice, which can be found here <https://designjustice.org/read-the-principles>, were not applicable to the Community Corrections environment as they fail to think about the mandatory rules and limited resources that Correctional facilities must operate under. As a response, I have updated the ten principles to be more relevant to institutions like Community Corrections.

To explore these principles further, this document includes:

1. a list of the principles that have been adapted for the Community Corrections environment and
2. a set of five, practical applications of these revised principles for the workplace.

#### **PRINCIPLE 1**

We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as strive for liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems with acknowledgement of the mandatory rules that dictate the activity.

#### **PRINCIPLE 2**

We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process through the use of constant feedback that moves upwards to those hired to design.

#### **PRINCIPLE 3**

We prioritize design’s impact on the subjects of the activity over the intentions of the designer.

## APPENDIX E: CONT.

### **PRINCIPLE 4**

We view change as emergent from an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process, with respect to the limited resources available to the users, rather than as a point at the end of a process.

### **PRINCIPLE 5**

We see the role of the designer as a facilitator rather than an expert.

### **PRINCIPLE 6**

We believe that everyone is an expert based on their own lived experience, whether these individuals are community insiders or not. We believe all individuals have unique and brilliant contributions that should be respected throughout design process.

### **PRINCIPLE 7**

We share design knowledge and tools with our communities as allowed by the rules that dictate the activity.

### **PRINCIPLE 8**

We work towards policy changes that allow for more sustainable, community-led and -controlled outcomes.

### **PRINCIPLE 9**

We work towards non-exploitative solutions that reconnect us to the earth and to each other.

### **PRINCIPLE 10**

Before seeking new design solutions, we look for what is already working at the community level. We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices. However, this does not prevent us from allowing others to join the community or from valuing outsiders' prior lived experiences.

## 5 Ways to Apply the Design Justice Principles in the Community Corrections Environment

Quote from Community Corrections employee:

Ways to apply this theme to your facility:

### 1. CENTERING THE USERS

"I think just really slowing it down and also kind of checking in with all the new CMs and seeing what they're struggling with and how we can help them because you know, they probably find more errors and things than we do..."



- Establishing constant feedback sessions with both new hires and seasoned employees.
- Provide suggestion boxes throughout the facility where staff and clients could anonymously voice their thoughts.

### 2. COLLABORATIVE & ONGOING

"We also want to start building some internal coaches, and not that they're formal roles or like absolute perfect subject matter experts, but folks who showed an interest in an area, really having an opportunity to support their peers, their colleagues around development in those areas."



- Training done through shadowing that relies on peers to learn from each other.
- Providing additional leadership and coaching training throughout staffs' time at Corrections.

### 3. ACCESS TO TOOLS & KNOWLEDGE

"It's always good to have something to look back to and kind of be able to figure it out yourself instead of just looking at it being like I don't even know how to do this, I don't know where to start."



- The creation of web-based training materials that can be accessed by all employees at anytime.
- Provide cross-training opportunities for all employees. For example, Community Corrections Specialist should have an understanding of the case manager role.



#### 4. VALUING PRIOR EXPERIENCE

"But like I said, I have also been working here for a year. So I knew the systems, I knew the clients. I felt like I was more prepared because I was working here previously."



- Supporting the use of internal hiring so that those promoted know the system well.
- Implementing a yearly staff meeting to hear the positive things already happening, while also providing a space for staff to voice concerns.

#### 5. SUSTAINABILITY

"We hire case managers and then we give them six months. By the time they reach six months, they're so overwhelmed. They still don't know what they're doing. And then they quit. Nobody's helping me. I suck at my job. Then we're back to, we have no case managers and then we start again."



- Provide training on time management skills.
- Again, providing additional leadership and coaching training throughout employment.
- Using an instant-messaging platform, such as Microsoft Teams, to create open lines of communication for staff.

#### Conclusion

The original principles of Design Justice failed to consider the potential limits of those designing, such as the rules staff are required to follow and the resources staff are working with. Because of this, I decided to redesign the principles of Design Justice to consider the boundaries of the activity before seeking to change the activity. This update aims to recognize the hard work already taking place in Community Corrections and to bring institutions like Community Corrections closer to the ideal of Design Justice, as they will be able to apply the tenets without being asked to make changes to the things outside of their control.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS THESIS PLEASE  
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