

**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE COLLEGE PERSISTENCE BY AFRICAN AMERICAN
MEN WHO HAVE HAD ENCOUNTERS WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

by

Ida Carol Simmons Short

**This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education**

Ferris State University

October 2019

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Ida Carol Simmons Short

Has been approved

October 2019

APPROVED:

George Swan, EdD

Committee Chair

Silverenia Q. Kanoyton, EdD

Committee Member

Sandra J. Balkema, PhD

Committee Member

Charlene Austin, PhD

Committee Member

Dissertation Committee

ACCEPTED:

Roberta C. Teahen, PhD, Director

Community College Leadership Program

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological research study was to examine internal and external factors that had an influence on persistence through graduation or transfer of African American men who had been involved with the criminal justice system. Internal factors are background characteristics of the students, and external factors are the services and support offered by the college and its personnel. The theoretical framework for this study is social learning and self-efficacy theory. Research has demonstrated that self-efficacy is an important aspect of human development in the cognitive and functioning aspects of individuals.

A total of 12 African American men who had had contact with the criminal justice system and were enrolled at an urban community college participated in the study. They were interviewed on the campus of the community college. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Nvivo 12. Eleven themes emerged from the interview data: encouragement, self-enrichment, social perception, career aspirations, improved decision-making, school resources, family support, family matters, lack of resources, family and friends, and t seclusion. A major finding of this study was the role of family in helping African American men attend college and persist through graduation. Their support and encouragement were major factors in their success.

These themes aligned with the participants' responses that having a higher level of education, making better choices, and believing that academic achievement could change the stigma of African American males in a social context. The findings of the qualitative study indicated that self-efficacy theory provided a theoretical foundation that was a significant aspect of African American males' understanding that an education was needed to be successful and

achieve their goals. The findings helped narrow the gap in the literature regarding the role of education in helping reduce recidivism and help African American men become productive members of society.

Key Words: African American men, college completion, self-efficacy

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Frances Simmons, who served as a role model in developing my love of reading and education. To my husband, Roger, and my children; Amir, Sonya, and Abiade, for your support and encouragement throughout this program.

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing a dissertation is a team project. I would like to thank George Swan, EdD for serving as the chairman of my committee. He was the captain who helped pilot the dissertation. To my committee members, Silverenia Q. Kanoyton, EdD, Sandra Balkema, PhD, and Charlene Austin, PhD, thank you for your encouragement, suggestions, and recommendations to help this dissertation come to fruition. To Roberta C. Teahen, PhD, director of the Community College Leadership Program, thank you for helping me throughout my doctoral program.

Thank you to Dr. Curtis Ivery for allowing me to do the study at the community college. I would also like to thank the 12 young African American men who agreed to participate in the study. A special thanks to Ms. Mattie Porter, Campus Executive Dean, for providing information about the 12 men. Thanks to Mr. Bruce Smith, a faculty member who was instrumental in helping recruit participants for the study. Discussing your reasons for choosing to pursue a college degree and telling me about your experiences at the college was very enlightening.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of the librarians: Wayne Pricer, Diane Nesbitt, Kristen Keyes, Vicki Dixon, Joseph Miller, and Betty Ong who helped with the locating and obtaining articles for the literature review. I would like to thank June Cline for her help. To my family and friends, thank you for providing support and encouragement throughout my program.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

A diverse population of students enrolls in community colleges. Over the years, the diversity has continued to expand. Enrollments in community colleges increased from 500,000 to more than 6,000,000 between 1960 and the beginning of the 21st century (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). The increase climbed another 1.5 million by 2009 (United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 2017).

As the general population increased, community colleges experienced an increase in the traditional age college students (18-24 years) with this growth peaking in 1979 and beginning to decline well into the 1980s, when it started to swing upwards again. However, during the enrollment decline period, community colleges increased their student population by expanding programs that appealed to older adults who desired to attend part time while working to upgrade their skills, land or improve their job opportunities (Cohen et al., 2014). In fall 2014, 42% of all undergraduate students were enrolled in community colleges. In addition, 25% of all full-time students were enrolled in community colleges (Ma & Baum, 2016). When all year-round student enrollments were considered, public community colleges enrolled 39% of undergraduate students in 2015-16 (Community College FAQs, 2017).

These enrollments reflect student diversity. For example, 42% of all community college enrollments nationwide are minority students including Hispanic, Asian, or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and African American (Cohen et al., 2014). African

Americans represent 15.7% of community college enrollments, with their percentage continuing to grow. By 2011, the number of African American students “exceeded the African American proportion of the 18- to 44-year-old population in all 50 states” (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 59).

African American Men in Community Colleges

African American men represent a minority share of the student population, although their percentages have increased from 26.0 % in 1990 to 34.1% of the African American population by 2015 (United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 2016). Despite their increased presence in postsecondary education, their scarcity on community college campuses is noticeable. African American men represent a total of 11.9% of all students enrolled in higher education (Harris & Wood, 2013). The most recent data indicate African American male enrollment has increased to 5% of student enrollment in community college (Aspirations to Achievement, 2014, p. 7). This data supported earlier findings by several researchers who found that African American men have been historically under-represented and underserved in higher education (Harris, Bensimon, & Bishop, 2010; Hilton, Wood, & Lewis, 2012; Noguera, 2003; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008). Moreover, these studies demonstrated that African American male students are near or at the bottom on most indicators of student success, including enrollment, persistence, achievement, engagement, and attainment (Harris & Wood, 2013). While the average time needed for full-time students to transfer from a community college to a college or university is three years, African American men remain in community college after five years from their entry date and tend not to persist through graduation or transfer (Perrakis, 2008).

African American Men with Criminal Backgrounds Enrolled in Community College

The number of African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system has increased in the past 40 years (Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014). As a result, the local, state, and federal government expenditures for placing these men have grown from \$6.7 billion in 1985 to \$56.9 billion by 2015 (The Sentencing Project, 2017). Over 2.2 million people are incarcerated in prisons and jails, and another 5 million are on parole or probation (The Sentencing Project, 2017; Travis et al., 2014). Based on these numbers, it appears that approximately 1 in 31 adults are involved in the federal and state criminal justice systems. According to Travis et al. (2014),” by age 23, at least a third of Americans have been arrested, compared with an estimated 22% in the mid-1960s, at least 16 million people have a criminal record that includes felony conviction” (p. 305).

Racial disparities exist in these numbers. Although African Americans and Hispanics constituted approximately 30% of the United States population, they represent about 50% of all state and federal inmates (The Sentencing Project, 2017). Figure 1 presents a graphical representation of the disparity of incarceration by ethnicity.

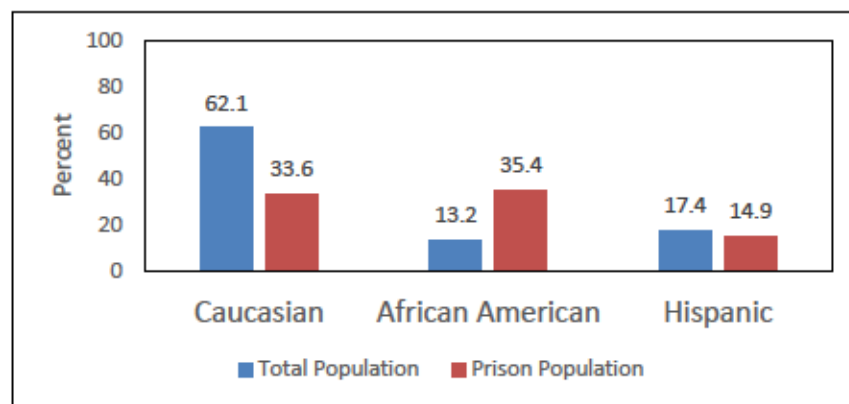


Figure 1: Comparison of Ethnic Populations in the United States and State and Federal Incarcerations. Adapted from The Sentencing Project, 2017.

Every year, more than 700,000 inmates are released from state and federal prisons without vocational and/or technical training that can lead to financially productive lives. The recidivism rate is high for these individuals, with approximately two-thirds of those men and women returning to prison within three years, and 75% return five years after their release (Larson, 2015). Recidivism is a costly revolving door. Efforts to prevent recidivism and to reduce jail and prison population simultaneously are important, especially with a cost of more than \$75 billion annually to taxpayers across the country (Schmitt, Warner, & Gupta, 2010).

Research revealed that in-house education programs helped to reduce recidivism and returned former prisoners to communities as tax paying citizens (Center for Prison Education, 2018; Kim & Clark, 2013; Maximino, 2014; Prison Studies Project, 2018; Westervelt, 2015). The availability of prison education programs has decreased over time due to budget cuts (Davis et al., 2014; Rothfield, 2009). However, the decline of these in-house prison education programs afforded community colleges with opportunities to provide quality educational opportunities as part of comprehensive re-entry programs that could lead to jobs, decrease recidivism, reduce crime, lessen the racial criminal justice imbalance, restore families, and improve the balance of male and females in African American communities (U. S. Department of Education, 2009).

A key factor that impedes inmates from attending college while in prison or jail is the lack of funding to help with the costs associated with higher education. The lack of adequate educational opportunities has existed since President Clinton signed the federal legislation that made prisoners no longer eligible to receive federal funding through the Pell Grant. According to Larson (2015), this grant funded less than 0.1% of 150 college programs offered to inmates, many of which were in community colleges. In 2007 and 2008, three federal initiatives — Prisoner Reentry Initiative, Second Chance Act of 2007, and Higher Opportunity Act of 2008 —

increased the availability of correctional education programs to prepare prisoners for obtaining employment after release. These programs are almost non-existent (U. S. Department of Education, 2009) with the number of prisoners enrolled in college courses similar to the number enrolled before the 1994 law made them become ineligible for the Pell grant.

According to Scott (2015), one of the most compelling reasons that community colleges have emerged as a major resource of crime prevention is that they can help ex-prisoners develop skills needed to become productive taxpaying citizens rather than societal burdens. Scott stated that:

Almost everyone in prison returns to the community they came from, and a community college education can make the difference between gainful employment and unemployment, a path to citizenship among various opportunities to return to a life of crime. The role of community college in providing ladders of opportunity goes back to the origins of the junior college. (pp. 1-2)

Importance of the Issue

Over the next few years, minority populations are expected to become the majority by 2050 if birth rates and immigration rates continue to hold (Chappell, 2015; Passel & Cohn, 2008). More than half of the nation's children will constitute the majority minority by 2020 (Chappell, 2015). According to Blackmon (2013), minority students are enrolling in college in record numbers. The fastest growing groups are minority students who have the lowest levels of educational attainment (College Board, 2010, p. 18). However, as the general population continues to "brown," more African American men, Asian American men, and Hispanic American men should have access to community college. According to the College Board (2010), minority students are enrolling in college in record numbers: "The fastest growing group are minority students who have the lowest level of educational attainment" (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCSSE], 2014, p. 6).

Statement of the Problem

According to Alexander (2010), 75% of African American men have had some involvement with the criminal justice system. This involvement can range from minor misdemeanors to major felonies. These individuals can be incarcerated into the prison system, placed in jail, released on a tether, or on probation. Without an education, these men may recidivate, fail to become gainfully employed, or lack the resources needed to be a productive member of society.

These African American men need to obtain an education or training if they are able to attain employment and become fully participating citizen in their communities. These individuals are under-represented on community college campuses in the United States. In many cases, community college administrators are unaware of their backgrounds that may affect their ability to graduate successfully or transfer to baccalaureate degree granting institutions. By understanding some of the factors that can impede their progress in a community college program, community college administrators can develop support programs, policies, and procedures to help them achieve success.

A paucity of research has been published on African American men with criminal backgrounds enrolled in community college. Most of the published research focuses on African American men's participation in support services, extracurricular activities, African American men's perceptions of their community college experiences, as well as ecological factors that affect African American men's persistence. Research has examined institutional environments, African American men's personal goals, and enrollment in community college while incarcerated. Community college administrators need to understand how to support these students effectively from enrollment through graduation or transfer. A gap exists in the literature

regarding internal and external factors that may influence the relationship between African American men with a criminal past who are enrolled in community college and their persistence through graduation, attainment of a certificate, or transfer to a 4-year institution.

Introduction to this Study

Purpose of the Study

The qualitative, phenomenological research study examined internal and external factors that may have an influence on persistence through graduation or transfer of African American men who had been involved with the criminal justice system. Internal factors are the background characteristics that students bring to the college. External factors are the services and support offered by the college and its personnel.

Research Questions

The overarching question that were addressed in this study is:

What internal and external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?

Two sub-questions were used to address the overarching question:

- What internal factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?
- What external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?

Significance of the Study

African American men who have been released from prison or jail need to find gainful employment to become fully functioning citizens. They need to develop skills necessary to meet

the demands of the labor force. Community colleges, with their open enrollment policies, provide the greatest opportunities for African American men with a criminal background. While programs are available, many African American men who enroll fail to complete their studies. Using a qualitative approach to understand factors that contribute to success and failure of these men can help develop an appreciation of why they do not complete their programs. Community college administrators need to understand these factors if they are going to develop policies and programs to help these students remain in their programs through completion.

Contribution to Practice

Harris and Wood (2013) discussed research conducted between 1998 and 2012 that found factors outside of academe affected African American males' matriculation. These factors included student integration into the academic arena, environmental, non-cognitive, institutional, and social. Harris and Wood (2013) defined the environmental domain as issues outside of the college that had a direct influence on the engagement of African American men, such as working off campus, family commitments, crime, poverty, and financial need. While previous research has examined factors affecting African American men in community college, they have not focused on African American men with a criminal background. The study expands the research to include African American men with criminal backgrounds who are enrolled in community college after being released from prison or jail.

Approach of the Study

The goal of the study was to determine factors that could help or hinder African American men with a criminal background from completing a certificate or associate degree program from their perceptions of the college. The study expanded on the research of Harris and

Wood (2013) that examined internal and external factors that are important in the success of African American men.

A qualitative phenomenological study was used as the research design in this study. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), “A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept of a phenomenon” (p. 75). Qualitative research is primarily concerned with asking how and why questions to obtain rich information that might be overlooked with quantitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Robson, 2002). A phenomenological design was employed because all participants in the study have experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), “case study is limited to describing the phenomenon rather than predicting future behavior” (p. 50).

The participants in the present study were African American men who have had experienced the criminal justice system and have been released. They may have been paroled, on probation, or released from the system. At the time of this study, these students were enrolled in an urban comprehensive, multi-campus community college located in the Midwest. A total of 12 participants participated in this study. Saturation was used to determine the number of participants who will be included in the study. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), saturation is reached when no additional information is obtained from the participants. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) conducted a series of experiences to determine the number of participants needed to reach saturation. They used a sample of 60 participants and determine that answers to interview questions became redundant after the first 12 interviews.

One of the counselors intimately familiar with the participants with a “criminal” past, was asked to identify potential participants. The researcher contacted each potential participant by

phone to discuss their participation in the study. If they expressed an interest, the researcher made an appointment to meet with the student at a mutually agreeable time and place. At this meeting, the researcher gave the student the informed consent form for review. If the participant agreed to participate, the researcher asked him to sign one copy of the consent form and retain a second copy for his records. The researcher then audiotaped the interviews for transcription.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher is the primary instrument for data in qualitative research (Patton, 2015, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2013, Robson, 2002). As a result, qualitative research is subject to the biases of the researcher that can impact the shape of the study and the study's results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, the researcher is an African American female faculty member in the English Department at a community college located in a large mid-western state. The students in the study attended a different comprehensive community college also located in the same mid-western state. The findings may not be generalizable to other community colleges in the same state or in other states.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was conducted at a single urban community college located in a large midwestern city. The participants included African American students who had contact with the criminal justice system, but at the time of the study were not incarcerated, or on parole or probation. The findings may not be generalizable to other community colleges in the midwestern state where the study was conducted or to students who are not African American or had not had contact with the criminal justice system.

Assumptions

An assumption of this study is that the men who have had encounters with the criminal justice system are attending college to improve their chances of being successful in life. In some cases, the men are court-ordered to attend college as a means of avoiding jail or prison. The researcher also assumed that the participants would answer the interview questions honestly.

Definition of Terms

African American/Black is defined as any person who is a United States citizen and who is of African descent.

Benefit to society is defined as “any benefits that accrue to society as a whole — including students, employers, taxpayers, and anyone else who stands to benefit from the activities of America’s community colleges are counted as benefits under the social perspective” (Economic Modeling Specialists, International, 2014, p.33).

Community college is defined as an accredited public, two-year higher educational institution that offers certificates, associate degrees, and community education.

Correctional education is defined as a part of the rehabilitation provided to inmates by state and federal prisons, jails, and detention centers. It includes adult basic education, English as a second language, and post-secondary education.

Corrections is defined as “the supervision of persons arrested for, convicted of, or sentenced for criminal offenses” (Carson & Anderson, 2017).

Cost-benefit ratio is defined as “present value of benefits divided by present value of costs. If the benefit-cost ratio is greater than 1, then benefits exceed costs, and the investment is feasible” (Economic Modeling Specialists, International, 2014, p. 55).

Criminal is defined as anyone who has a local, state, or and/or federal police record or anyone who was jailed/detained without being charged, on probation, on parole, or completed a jail or prison sentence.

Gross domestic product is defined as the “measure of the final value of all goods and services produced in the nation after netting out the cost of goods used in production. Alternatively, gross domestic product equals the combined incomes of all factors of production, i.e., labor, land and capital” (Economic Modeling Specialists, International, 2014, p. 56).

Incarceration is defined as punishment by imprisonment-and is based on a set of laws established by any state or nation to assure public safety by the separation and isolation of criminals from society (Drucker, 2011, p. 40).

Investment analysis is defined as “the process of evaluating total costs and measuring these against total benefits to determine whether or not a proposed venture will be profitable” (Economic Modeling Specialists, International, 2014, p. 25).

Labor income is defined as “income that is received as a result of labor, i.e., wages” (Economic Modeling Specialists, International, 2014, p. 56).

Meta-analysis is defined as statistical procedures used to aggregate the results of several studies in order to integrate the findings.

Open access is defined as the individual’s opportunity to freely attend a two-year higher educational institution.

Phenomenological study is a strategy of inquiry, a methodology for conducting research (Moustakas, 1994).

Post-secondary education is defined as coursework, either academic or vocational, for which an inmate may receive college credit that may be used toward a two-year, four-year, or graduate college degree (Winterfeld, Coggeshall, Burke-Storer, Correa, & Tidd, 2009, p.2)

Recidivism is defined by James (2017) as “the re-arrest, re-conviction, or re-incarceration of an ex-offender within three years of release” (as cited in Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016, p. 5).

Recidivism rate is defined as the percentage of men who commit crimes that result in their return to prison. About 40% of all released state and federal prisoners return to prison because they violate the terms of their release or commit new crimes (Davis et al., 2014). Recidivism rates also include the rates of rearrests, re-convictions, or re-incarceration (Chappell, 2004).

Return on investment is defined as “the value of their [students’] future benefit stream, i.e., what they expect to earn in return for the investment they make in education” (Economic Modeling Specialists International, 2014, p. 28).

Young adult is defined as 18 to 24-year old adults.

Summary and Forecast

The purpose of the research was to investigate how community colleges can better serve African American men with criminal backgrounds. The five chapters of the dissertation are

divided into the following sections. Chapter One provided the introduction, statement of the problem, and overview of the process used to conduct the study was discussed in chapter one. The purpose, rationale, and significance of the problem were discussed, and terminology defined that was utilized throughout the study. Chapter Two consists of the literature review. The literature review contains relevant studies that were conducted on African American men in higher education, community college, and enrollment in community college while incarcerated. Chapter Three provides the methodology employed for the study. Chapter Four contains the collection of the data and analysis of the results, and Chapter Five summarizes and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The qualitative, phenomenological research study examines internal and external factors that may have an influence on persistence through graduation or transfer of African American men who have been or currently are involved with the criminal justice system. Internal factors are the background characteristics that students bring to the college. External factors are the services and support offered by the college and its personnel. The comprehensive review of literature will include the theoretical framework for the study, the history of incarceration, correctional education, community college, and effects of education on recidivism.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is Bandura's social learning and self-efficacy theory. Bandura's (1993, 1999; 2006b) research demonstrated that self-efficacy was an important aspect of human development in the cognitive and functioning aspects of individuals. In addition, Bandura (2006) found self-efficacy was necessary for an individual to have human agency. Bandura defined human agency as the ability "to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances... personal influence is part of the causal structure. People are self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting.... They are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them" (p. 164). Human agency is essential, and without human agency, individuals might not be able to create a better life for themselves. This

dissertation investigates the effects of postsecondary education on perceptions of self-efficacy and personal agency among former inmates.

Education has the potential to transform inmates and former inmates by giving them the skills necessary to achieve gainful employment, and it provides the socialization necessary for inmates and former inmates to achieve self-actualization and human agency. When inmates and former inmates realize their freedom depends on their ability to determine the positive outcomes of their futures, they can achieve their goals through self-efficacy and personal agency. Each of the four properties of human agency is discussed below as well as the role of self-efficacy within an academic arena's influence on the development of human agency.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is generally regarded as individuals' perceptions of their abilities to achieve goals. According to Bandura (1993; 1997), self-efficacy affects what people chose to do and how they do it. Peoples' motivation, personal feelings and attitudes, and behaviors are affected by their beliefs about their abilities to exercise control over their lives and the environment that affects their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1993).

The relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement of undergraduate students and postgraduate students in higher education has been studied extensively. Researchers found that self-efficacy was positively and moderately correlated to academic performance (Galyon, Blondin, Yaw, Nalls, & Williams, 2012; Klomegah, 2007; Lane & Lane, 2001; Richardson, Abraham, & Bond, 2012). Other researchers indicated that self-efficacy was a significant and moderately positive predictor of academic performance (Choi, 2005; Coutinho, 2008; Lane, Lane & Kyprianou, 2004). Self-efficacy also was a direct and strong predictor of academic progress among first-year college students (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001). The effects

of self-efficacy are influenced by four main processes — cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection. Each process is discussed and includes the relationship between self-efficacy and academic success and personal agency.

Cognitive processes. Self-efficacy beliefs affect the cognitive processes in various ways. People who set goals usually assess their capabilities to reach these goals. People with higher levels of self-efficacy generally establish higher goals for themselves and have a stronger commitment to accomplish these goals (Bandura, 1991). Bandura (1993) found people's actions are first set in thought and are based on beliefs in their self-efficacy. These people visualize various scenarios involved to reach their goals. They visualize their capacity to achieve their goals and the various skills necessary to perform the behaviors needed to reach their goals. Bandura (1993) found having skills is not sufficient to achieve goals; rather, people must believe they can use these skills to achieve their goal. People must be able to predict their future, visualize future scenarios, test their ideas, anticipate possible revisions, adjust their judgements, and use the behaviors necessary to achieve their goals. Other self-efficacy beliefs can have an influence on cognitive processes that include four cognitive processes, (a) concept of ability, (b) social comparison influences, (c) framing feedback, and (d) social comparison influences. Concept of ability is described as peoples' beliefs in their abilities to accomplish a goal. They accept failure as a natural part of learning and seek opportunities to learn and learn from their mistakes (Berry, 1987). People will compare their abilities to others in terms of their goal attainments. These comparisons become part of the basis with which people make their own judgments about their own personal capabilities.

As people strive to reach their goals, they receive feedback regarding their performance. Jourden (1993) found the way that people receive feedback can affect their self-efficacy

appraisal. Feedback that focuses on the positive achievements enhance perceived self-efficacy whereas feedback that focuses on the shortfalls/the negatives undermines perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993).

People need to believe they have some control of their environments. People must believe they have control in two areas — the level of strength of control and the ability to change their environment. People must believe they can reach their goals and need to realize that opportunities, as well as constraints, are available and believe they can affect change.

Motivational processes. Bandura (1993) found people are motivated by what they think and believe. In addition, people visualize results of their actions, create plans based on these actions, and set goals. People's beliefs about their academic ability also influence their academic pursuits. Individuals with strong motivation are likely to be successful, while those with low academic efficacy are not expected to fare well because of their lack of engagement with the academic requirements. Bandura (1993) delineated three types of cognitive motivation, including "causal attributions, outcome expectancies, and cognized goals" (p. 128). These theories include attribution theory, expectancy-value theory, and goal theory. People's self-efficacy beliefs are mitigated by the influence of their causal attributions which affect their motivations, performance, and emotional reactions. Expectancy-value theory is the belief that people have in their capabilities and they visualize specific outcomes based on their performance. Researchers (de Vries, Dijkstra, & Kuhlman, 1988; Dzewaltowski, Noble, & Shaw, 1990; Wheeler, 1983) found that individuals' expected outcomes are affected in part by beliefs in their capabilities. Individuals' behaviors are motivated by goals that they are working on presently. People reflect on their goals and evaluate their progress toward reaching the set goals. According to Locke and

Latham (1990), motivation is persistent and sustained when goals are clearly stated and challenging (Bandura, 1993).

Affective processes. Bandura (1993) found self-efficacy was mediated by individuals' beliefs in their ability to control stress and their emotions, particularly depression, when they were in difficult and/or threatening environments. Individuals who believed they could control threats were less likely to develop negative and detrimental thought patterns. In contrast, those who did not believe they could control external stressors typically had higher levels of anxiety. These individuals focused on their deficiencies, amplified threats and dangers of the environment, and experienced unnecessary worry even when these threats did not reveal themselves. These negative affective responses carried undue levels of stress that prevented individuals from functioning and completing day-to-day activities. Those with strong self-efficacy were able to reduce their stress levels and manage challenges effectively. Meece, Wigfield, and Eccles (1990) found that students with low self-efficacy often became anxious about academic demands. According to Bandura (1993), low sense of self-efficacy to exercise control over their environment made students depressed and anxious in three distinct ways: (a) students with low self-efficacy realized they might not attain their goals; (b) low self-efficacy could result in low social efficacy; (c) students with strong self-efficacy tended to manage failure appropriately. Ozer and Bandura (as cited in Jones, 2017) found that individuals' who perceived they were able to control their affective domains and their environment lowered their anxiety and were less likely to use avoidance behaviors.

Selection processes. Individuals' personal efficacy help determine the course their lives take. People tend to avoid situations they believe they are either incapable of handling and/or unable to cope. Instead they choose activities and environments that they believe they can

handle. Hence, people develop a unique set of competencies, interests, and social networks over the course of their lives. Researchers found that people's choices of careers, career options, and development had high positive levels of self-efficacy (Betz & Hackett; Lent & Hackett as cited in Bandura, 1993). Individuals' self-efficacy could influence career choices that influence choices of academic programs in which they enroll, invest in preparing for classes, and persist even in the face of adversity. Students with strong self-efficacy work harder, develop skills, academic pathways, and resources to help them achieve their goals.

Human agency. According to Bandura (2006), human agency is the ability of human beings to set goals, reflect, and evaluate courses of action and change behaviors/actions to achieve desired goals. To achieve these goals, humans must use the four properties of human agency — intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 1997, 2006). Intentionality is defined as setting goals and planning specific strategies to reach these goals. People must share their goals and plans with others to accomplish their intentions through collective efforts. Bandura (1997, 2006) found that people think about their futures and plan based on the goals they set, anticipating the possible outcomes. Their current and future behaviors are guided by achieving their visualized goals. Self-reactiveness requires people to initiate their action plans to achieve their goals. They need to monitor the execution of these plans, and direct or redirect their efforts as necessary to achieve their goals. Self-reflectiveness is defined as people examining their thoughts and actions to assess progress in meeting their goals and having the necessary personal self-efficacy to make adjustments as needed to accomplish their plans (Bandura (1997; 2006). As a result, people have some control over their lives and do not become victims of their circumstances. Instead, people are “proactive contributors of their life circumstances, not just products of them” (Bandura, 2006, p.164).

Within academic settings, students with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to be successful in accomplishing their academic goals. Understanding the role of self-efficacy in helping African American men who have had been incarcerated persist in achieving an education at a community college is important. Limited research on this population has not explored the characteristics of these men that have influenced their desire to attend college and create a better future for themselves.

A Brief History of Incarceration

The British initially created prisons as temporary holding facilities for common criminals awaiting their trials (James, 2017; Lynch, 2011). Political prisoners, prisoners of war, and debtor prisoners were held for longer periods. Upon sentencing, prisoners either were immediately released or put to death. Prisoners who had been recently detained would replace those released after their trials (Karpinski, 2014).

In the mid-16th century, the English Tudor Family created workhouses for prisoners, with the first one created from a royal palace, Bridewell. The Bridewell model became popular, and by 1570, the number of workhouses increased. Prisoners were neglected, and many died from malnutrition and diseases, such as typhus. Prior to the American Revolution, judges began offering prisoners banishment to the American colonies or to Australia as an alternative to the death penalty. People believed prisons were worse than banishment because of the poor condition of the buildings and maltreatment of the prisoners resulting in their deaths.

These poor conditions resulted in prison reforms that led to improved conditions and treatment of prisoners. Among these reformers was Richard Mead who wrote in 1720s that these workhouses should be clean and well kept. Mead recommended staff should be paid, prisoners should have proper diets, and third parties should evaluate prisons. Mead's ideas encouraged

other reformers' interest in improving the workhouses. In 1777, John Howard wrote about the importance of workhouses as a means of punishment for prisoners, but he criticized their uncleanliness, corruption, and prisoner abuse.

By the late 1700s, Americans began to re-examine its prison system and prisoner treatment. A Quaker group called the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons was active in prison reform from the 1770s to 1790s. In addition, this group also wanted to punish prisoners and require them to work in the workhouses. Quaker ideas influenced the way prisons operated in America (James, 2017; Lynch, 2011).

The Age of Enlightenment with its philosophical ideas had an influence on the purpose of prisons. The philosophers (e.g., Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, and Beccaria) espoused that people, while not perfect, were capable of redemption and reformation. According to Allen and Simonsen (as cited in James, 2017), philosophers influenced colonists to move away from the death penalty. As the death penalty was limited to first-degree murder and other serious crimes, the need for prisons for other criminals increased. Rush, a signor of the Declaration of Independence, stated this new conception of prisons in 1787:

In the design of punishment is said to be —1st, to reform the person who suffers it, — 2ndly, to prevent the perpetration of crimes, by exciting terror in the minds of spectators; and, —3rdly, to remove those persons from society, who have manifested, by their tempers and crimes, that they are unfit to live in it. (Karpinski, 2014, para. 26)

Scholars (James, 2017; Karpinski, 2014), found that despite the new ideas concerning the role of prisons, concerns about eliminating the death penalty lead to the development of the first penitentiary in United States in 1789, the Walnut Street Jail located in Philadelphia.

Bentham's ideas about the structure of prisons and treatment of prisoners were detailed in his Penaptonic Writings in 1791 (Karpinski, 2014). His ideas included structural reforms as well

as architectural reforms. One architectural reform that is still used in prisons today is the perpetual surveillance of inmates from a central point in the prison.

The new prison system was not adopted universally, because between 1776 and 1857 another parallel system developed in England that forced inmates to work during the day and live chained on anchored ships called hulks at night in Portsmouth, Thames, or Plymouth. These hulks were replete with problems, including inhumane treatment of prisoners, that led to their eventual demise. During this time, the British parliament passed the Penitentiary Act of 1779 that created a national policy for state prisons and recommended them as an alternative to the death penalty and to the transportation of prisoners to America and Australia (Karpinski, 2014). Other reforms ensued, resulting in the first national British penitentiary in Millbank, London. This prison followed the guidelines of the Penitentiary Act of 1779 requirement of one prisoner per cell and daytime work requirements.

The limitations on imposition of the death penalty led to the growth of two types of prison systems — the solitary prisons that began in Philadelphia (The Eastern State Penitentiary) and the silent/congregate penitentiaries in New York-- Auburn and Sing Sing. In solitary prisons, inmates are kept separate and are not allowed any communication among them (Woodham, 2008). Silent/congregate penitentiaries were institutions that discouraged all communication among inmates, while forcing them to perform hard labor (Ryder, 2018). Both types of prisons offered cruel and inhumane punishment meant to deter future criminal acts. Corruption and other irregularities within prisons led to the formation of the Prison Commission in 1877. A new emphasis was placed on prevention of offending and recidivism. The Prison Act of 1898 continued to emphasize reform and abolished hard labor but required prisoners to work. By the end of the 19th century, juvenile correctional facilities were developed.

In the 20th century, the Prevention of Crime Act, 1908 brought back hard labor, technical education, and creation of a moral atmosphere for youths. This act allowed youths to work and gradually pass from one grade to the other until released. In 1948, the Criminal Justice Act abolished hard labor and beatings, and allowed the growth of other forms of incarceration ensued such as detention centers and borstal institutions that were intended to reform youth who were severely delinquent. From the 1960s through the 1990s, prisons were places of isolation and punishment, yet some inmates had the possibility of early parole as they progressed toward rehabilitation. By 1993, the federal prison service system gave prisons more authority over daily operations, while the government maintained control over policies (Karpinski, 2014). An increase in prisons occurred during this time period. At the present time, five types of prisons (maximum security prisons, super maximum security, medium security, minimum security, and open institutions) are operating in the United States (Karpinski, 2014).

The Age of Mass Incarceration

The term *mass incarceration* refers to the way in which the United States imprisons substantial numbers of people in various correctional facilities, including local jails, state prisons, and federal prisons (Alexander 2010; Nott, 2016). The United States incarcerates more people than any country in the world (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017). The number of people incarcerated has increased, resulting in 6,741,400 people under supervision in the United States, with another 4,650 under community supervision, and 2.3 million in prisons across the country (Kaeble & Glaze, 2017; Wagner & Rabuy, 2017). According to Carson and Anderson (2017), those under the auspices of corrections fall in one of the two categories above—institutional corrections or community corrections. Wagner and Rabuy (2017) stated,

The American criminal justice system holds more than 2.3 million people in 1,719 state prisons, 102 federal prisons, 901 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,163 local jails, and 76 Indian Country jails, as well as in military prisons, immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centers, and prisons in the U.S. territories. (p. 1)

One in five people (about 500,000 annually) are locked up for nonviolent drug offenses, (Wagner and Rabuy, 2017). Although 641,000 people are released annually, another 9 million people cycle in and out of jails over 11 million times annually (Wagner & Rabuy (2017). This figure is not part of the data collected and reported as part of the number of people who are in state and federal prisons because they are never charged with a crime or convicted of a crime (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017). Another 187,000 people are convicted of misdemeanors, and they are sentenced less than one year (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017). These figures vary depending on the manner in which the data are collected (Carson & Anderson, 2017; Wagner & Rabuy, 2015, 2016, 2017). “The Sentencing Project” (2017) reported that 2.2 million inmates are currently being held in state and federal correctional facilities. Another 3.8 million people are on probation and 820,000 are on parole (Wagner & Rabuy, 2016). The statistics that compare Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic disparities in the prison populations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Prison Populations by Race (Percentages)

PRISON POPULATIONS	CAUCASIAN	AFRICAN AMERICAN	HISPANIC
U. S. population	62.1	13.2	17.4
Jail incarceration	47.4	35.4	14.9
State & federal incarceration	33.6	35.4	21.6
Life sentence	33.4	48.3	14.4
Life without parole	33.5	56.4	7.4
Death row population	42.5	41.7	13.0

Source: Walsh, 2016

Historians have documented the influence of national laws passed in the 1980s and 1990s that were aimed at reducing crime and drug wars in large urban areas. In addition, these laws were enforced in an uneven manner that resulted in the incarceration of disproportionate numbers of African Americans and other people of color. The percentages of African Americans who were incarcerated were highest when compared to the population of the United States (Alexander, 2010; Erisman & Contardo, 2005, Wagner & Rabuy, 2017). Human Rights Watch (2008,2009a, 2009b) found African Americans were incarcerated at a rate of 80% to 90% for drug crimes in seven states. In most states, African Americans are sent to prison at higher rates than Caucasians, although drug usage is approximately equal among races (Alexander, 2012; Erisman & Contardo, 2005; Wagner & Rabuy, 2017). African American men are arrested, charged, and sentenced to prison at a rate of more than 13 times higher than Caucasians who have committed similar crimes (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017).

Correctional Education

Correctional education in the United States has a history that goes back for more than 200 years (Gehring, 1995; Messemer, 2011). During its earliest history dating back to 1789, correctional education was not available in all 13 colonies. Prior to 1789, the public believed criminals should be punished in a public manner to prevent others from committing crimes (Clear & Cole, 1994). By 1789, Reverend William Rogers began offering education to inmates at Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail (Chlup, 2005). Walnut Street Jail was considered to be the first prison in the country. Prison education consisted of teaching inmates to read using the Bible. Teachers were ministers who tutored students in Biblical studies (Gehring & Wright, 2003). Walnut Street Jail and other prisons offered literacy training to promote the prisoners' desire to seek salvation. The Puritan volunteers' method for teaching salvation required inmates to have

the ability to read the Bible. Therefore, correctional education programs were literacy focused and referred to as “Sabbath Schools (Gehring, 1995; Messemer, 2011). Over time, the Walnut Street Prison developed an educational program that provided prisoner instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as religion.

The English philosophy regarding crime and prisoners continued in the colonies until William Penn, a Quaker, espoused the ideals of humanity, nonviolence, human dignity, and rehabilitation of prisoners (Clear & Cole, 1994). The Quaker ideals resulted in the creation of another prison system in Pennsylvania, the Eastern Pennsylvania Penitentiary. According to Silva (1994), the prison system separated its prisoners into individual cells where each offender was held in solitary confinement and denied access to other prisoners. The inmates could participate in Biblical studies that were taught by prison chaplains whose purpose was to instill moral values in the prisoners and teach illiterate prisoners how to read [the Bible]. The chaplains led discussions as the primary method of teaching prisoners.

Between 1826 and 1840, more secular subjects were offered to inmates (Messemer, 2011). These subjects included reading, writing, and math. In a few prisons, inmates received additional instruction in history and geography (Messemer, 2011). Other inmates at correctional facilities, such as Sing Sing, received instruction in geography, astronomy, physiology, and physical education (Gehring, 1995; Messemer, 2011).

The ideals of rehabilitating prisoners continued and expanded into the mid-1800s, with several states, including New York and Kentucky, passing laws requiring prison education. New York State expanded prisoner education between 1876 and 1900. New York emphasized the importance of education by requiring all prisons to hire qualified teachers (Vacca, 2004). Zebulon Brockway, the first prison superintendent of New York, pioneered several educational

programs for prisoners, including special education, vocational education, academic programs, and social services (Chlup, 2005; Gehring, 1997). For the first time in the history of prisons, prisoners' school records were maintained, prisoner confinement was partially determined by educational progress, and individualized student instruction was linked to prisoner treatment and rehabilitation (Gehring, 1997.).

In 1914, Osbourne created The Mutual Welfare League at the New York penitentiary to create a system of self-governance among inmates and provide education. This self-governing system was later adopted and improved at Sing Sing prison. These efforts were the first attempt at convicts practicing self-governance and establishing rules for themselves (Helfman, 1950

From the 1920s through the 1950s, correctional education continued to evolve, finding a national presence. Politicians, as well as prison personnel, recognized that inmates could be rehabilitated and the need for their rehabilitation was necessary for the United States economy. According to Eggleston & Gehring (as cited in Messemer, 2011), "Schools were seen as a solution to the problems of industrialization, urbanization, increased crime rates, social upheaval, the need to Americanize vast numbers of immigrants, and advocacy of the democratic ideal" (p. 92). Across the country, prisons hired teachers to provide inmates with vocational training to meet the United States mandate for skilled laborers (Messemer, 2011).

The Correctional Education Association (CEA) was founded in 1930 by MacCormick. In 1931, MacCormick conducted a survey of 110 correctional education programs for adult prisoners and published the results in the book, *The Education of Adult Prisoners: A Survey and a Program* (Chlup, 2005). The CEA continues its work with an expanded role in correctional education that focuses on key areas: (a) providing inmates with rehabilitation, academic, and/or vocational training; (b) providing personal, and social skills training; (c) providing and

improving professional development and leadership opportunities for educators; (d) supporting correctional education through lobbying and public awareness (Chlup, 2005).

Two other factors increased participation in correctional education programs in prisons. The General Education Development (GED) test was created in 1942 and provided opportunities for people to receive a high school equivalency diploma (Tyler, 2005). The G.I. Bill expanded educational opportunities for veterans to obtain their GED and/or postsecondary education by providing financial assistance. By the 1960s, the GED was offered in educational institutions and prisons across the United States.

The GI Bill also made provisions for prison education of incarcerated veterans. During this time-period, colleges and prisons systematically offered courses and degrees, although prison and college articulation existed as far back as the late 1920s (Silva, 1994). In 1965, Congress passed Title IV of the Higher Education Act that provided grants and loans for students to obtain postsecondary educations (Hegji, 2014). This act provided direct financial support for students, as well as to higher educational institutions to enhance and expand their academic programs.

The creation of the Pell Grant (formerly called the Basic Opportunity Grant (BOG) in 1972 increased the financial ability of the general population to obtain a postsecondary education (Pell Institute, 2017). The Pell grant provided financial support to American citizens from low-income families who wanted to earn undergraduate degrees and certificates. Originally, incarcerated individuals were included in the legislation, as there was a wide-spread belief that these funds could help prisoners have a better future (Gehring, 1997; Silva, 1994). In addition, the Pell grant increased the number of prison programs and prisoners enrolled in postsecondary

correctional education programs and provided support for certain postgraduate programs (Silva, 1994; Tewksbury, Erickson, & Taylor, 2000).

Between the 1960s and 1970s, correctional education programs experienced additional financial support as the result of the Manpower Development Training Act of 1963 (Wolford as cited in Messemer, 2011). As correctional education programs expanded nationwide, the prevailing ideology of correctional education grew from teaching adult basic education (ABE) skills (reading, writing, and math) to focusing on changing inmates' behaviors (Hobler as cited in Messemer, 2011).

Behavioral theory was used to influence behavior change of the inmates. The inclusion of behavioral theory marked a shift in correctional education that was in response to the recognition that academic programs and vocational/technical skills training were not sufficient to change inmate behaviors. Hobler (as cited in Messemer, 2011) stated the rationale for this shift succinctly, "vocational training alone is not effective rehabilitation. Rather, an educational system must prepare inmates not just to earn a living, but to meet their total needs as well" (p. 92).

Decline and Resurgence of Post-secondary Correctional Education Programs

Correctional education grew and expanded in the United States for a period. During the 20th century, correctional education faced national challenges that had a negative effect on the ability of the prison system to offer educational opportunities to inmates. Although inmate participation in correctional education increased nationwide, some political forces were working to eliminate postsecondary education and rehabilitation approaches for prisoners. Conservative legislators worked from the 1980s to the early 1990s when they successfully passed the Violent Crime control and Law Enforcement Act and the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1994

that prohibited the use of Pell grants in correctional institutions. This legislation passed despite available research that demonstrated the positive effects of the correctional postsecondary education and its effects on reducing recidivism (Adams et al., 1994; Duguid, Hawkey & Knights, 2008; Gerber & Fritsch, 1995; Jancic, 1998; Piotrowski & Lathrop, 2012). In addition, the crime rate was decreasing across the country from 1990 through 1999. The crime rate dropped from 5% to 10%, and violence dropped 5% (Eisen & Chettiar, 2016).

In 1992, Representative Bart Gordon from Tennessee advocated his cause — the ban on Pell grants for prisoners. Gordon and his allies made inaccurate claims about the number of prisoners receiving the Pell grant in comparison to students from the general population receiving the Pell grant. Gordon claimed 1,000,000 prisoners received the Pell grant out of the 4 million recipients (Jilani, 2015, p. 3,4). People and organizations mobilized to defeat the repeal of the Pell grant, but it was a temporary victory. Senator Jesse Helms, a Republican from North Carolina took up the cause of banning the Pell grant for prisoners. In addition, the national NBC program, *Dateline*, aired a program called “Society’s Debt” that showed two opposing stories about crime and the Pell grant. One segment consisted of college students struggling to pay tuition bills, while the other segment showed survivors of crime angered over the fact that prisoners were receiving Pell grants (Jilani, 2015). Representative Gordon used this information to further his cause of eliminating the Pell grant for inmates. He took the public position that “Law abiding students have every right to be outraged when a Pell Grant for a policeman’s child is cut, but a criminal that the officer sends to prison can get a big check” (as quoted in Jilani, 2015, p. 3). Senator Harris Wofford, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, switched his support for the Pell grant due to attacks he experienced from the right wing (Jilani, 2015).

The demise of the Pell grant was the result of the “hysteria in the media” and mobilized social pressures from around the country. The pressure to eliminate the Pell grant overshadowed the facts about the number of prisoners who received Pell grants. Prisoners receiving Pell grants represented 1 out of every 500 recipients (Jilani, 2015, p. 3). According to a report by the Government Accounting Office (GAO), “Only 23,000 of the approximately 4 million Pell recipients were incarcerated” (as cited in Jilani, 2015, p. 3). The report’s analysis showed the monies spent on Pell grants for inmates did not have a negative impact on other students’ Pell grants (Jilani, 2015, pp. 3-4). The Correctional Education Association’s 1997 study of the recidivism rates of three states (Maryland, Minnesota, and Ohio) revealed the recidivism rate decreased by 29% resulting in a two-dollar savings for every dollar spent on correctional education (Jilani, 2015). Prisoner eligibility for Pell grants was eliminated in 1994 with the passing of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Acts which eliminated the possibility of inmates with felonies from receiving the Pell (Eichner, 2017). The loss of the Pell grant resulted in the cessation of most postsecondary education programs in prison settings. Prior to the passage of these acts, 350 postsecondary correction programs were available for prisoners across the United States (Jilani, 2015). By 1997, eight postsecondary correctional education programs survived.

The General Education Development (GED) test that allows individuals to earn a high school diploma equivalent was changed in 2014. The GED was aligned with the national Common Core Standards and the pencil and paper tests were replaced with computer-based testing (Clarke, 2014). As reported in the RAND (2014) report, more than 75% of corrections institutions across the United States reported increased costs associated with the new GED computerized test. The new GED cost \$120 to administer compared to \$70 for a paper and pencil

test. The RAND report indicated the new GED test arrived at the same time states were cutting funding for prisoners (Clarke, 2014). Davis et al. (2014) reported that 52% of correctional education directors in 31 states indicated that the new test was expected to have a negative effect on the number of prisoners who earned a GED, with 68% predicting a decline in prisoner participation in GED programs. Another 42% of prison officials believed prisoners would require more time to prepare for the new GED tests, and another 45% expected prisoners to be prepared for the test adequately.

Resurrection of Pell Grants and Re-growth of Post-secondary Corrections Programs

The prison correctional programs began to expand with the passage of two key federal laws: The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1998 and the Incarcerated Youth Offender Program block grants. These laws allowed inmates under 25 years of age to obtain postsecondary education and vocational training; however, the inmates were required to be eligible for release within five years of receiving the training (Winterfield et al., 2009). However, prison programs offering correctional postsecondary education had not returned to their former levels, resulting in only 30 states offering postsecondary education programs by 2002 (Messemer, 2003) and 43 states offered programs by 2004 (Erisman & Contardo, 2005). For example, the 2005 Census of State and Federal Correctional Facilities report found that 85% of the facilities reporting offered some type of education programs, but only 35% offered college courses (100 out of 102 facilities reporting). Less than one-third of state correctional institutions offered postsecondary education, representing a decrease from 13.9% in 1997 to 7.3% in 2004.

In 2015, Congress restored Pell grants for prisoners, which motivated prisoners to participate in postsecondary education within prisons. The ban was lifted because the U.S. Department of Education wanted “to test new models to allow incarcerated Americans to receive

Pell Grants and pursue the postsecondary education with the goal of helping them get jobs, support their families, and turn their lives around” (Eichner, 2017, p. 3).

Impact of Postsecondary Correctional Education on Recidivism

The level of educational attainment can be a predictor of prisoners’ ability to integrate into society after completing their sentencing (Davis et al., 2014). Research findings provided evidence that postsecondary prison programs improve inmates’ opportunities for employment and avoidance of recidivism (Ford & Schroeder, 2010; Lockwood et al., 2012). Former inmates who earned postsecondary certificates or degrees were not as likely to reoffend because postsecondary credentials helped them obtain better employment, experience less social stigma, and cope with their families (Chappell, 2004; Palmer, 2012; Ward, 2009). In addition, former inmates who graduated from postsecondary correctional programs had more professional job opportunities with higher earning potential than those who did not graduate (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011; Ward, 2009).

Earlier studies examined the recidivism rates of inmates relative to their educational level. Former inmates who participated in higher levels of education while in prison had lower recidivism rates than inmates who did not participate in these programs. Stevens and Ward (1997) studied 60 former inmates who had earned either associate or bachelor’s degrees while incarcerated and were released in 1991. They found that the prisoners with college degrees had lower recidivism rates when compared to former inmates without degrees. All inmates who completed a four-year degree had not recidivated at a three-year follow-up, concluding that the level of education affected recidivism (Stevens & Ward, 1997). In addition, Stevens and Ward (1997) conducted a study of seven states’ correctional education programs (Illinois, Texas, New York, Oklahoma, Alabama, Maryland, Florida) using data collected from the program

administrators. Their findings provided additional evidence that completing postsecondary education degrees could reduce recidivism.

Other researchers conducted meta-analysis studies of the efficacy of previous recidivism studies. Adams et al. (1994) analyzed 90 different studies and determined that regardless of the type of study, correctional education led to a decrease in recidivism. Davis et al. (2014) reviewed 75 recidivism studies on behalf of the Correctional Education Association (CEA). Based on the results of their analyses, they concluded that most studies found the recidivism rate was reduced as a result of correctional education. Davis et al. (2014) revealed that inmates who participated in prison education programs recidivated 43% less than those who did not participate in these programs. This figure represented a 13% reduction in reoffending and recidivism rate. In addition, inmates who participated in correctional education increased their post-release employability by 13%. Davis et al. (2014) found recidivism rate decreases of 50% when the incarcerated enroll in postsecondary education courses. Wilson, Gallagher, and MacKenzie (2000) reviewed the methodologies used in 33 studies, concluding that recidivism rates were reduced because of three factors, correctional education, vocational training, and work programs. Chappell (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 15 studies published between 1990 and 1999 that investigated the influence of postsecondary education on recidivism. The studies were included in the analysis if they met the criteria of having secondary and postsecondary training, including vocational education, certificate, and/or degree programs, as well as graduate programs. A study was included if it measured inmates' recidivism rates. Chappell's (2004) analysis provided evidence of a statistically significant positive relationship between postsecondary correctional education and the reduction of recidivism ($r = .31$). A stronger relationship was found among inmates who completed the program compared to those who participated but did not finish.

Winterfield, Coggeshall, Burke-Storer, Correa, & Tidd (2009) studied the effects of postsecondary education (PSE) on inmates while incarcerated and after their release. The researchers conducted the study of participants from three states' correctional facilities (Indiana, Massachusetts, and New Mexico) representing four correctional institutions. The study included recidivism data for 3,406 former inmates, 2,592 who had not participated in PSE while in prison and 814 who had been in these types of programs. Among the non-PSE participants, 72.6% had not returned to prison following release, while 79.6% of the PSE participants had not recidivated. These data provide evidence that participation in PSE programs was effective in helping former inmates become productive citizens.

Nally, Lockwood, Ho, and Knutson (2012) conducted a five-year follow-up study (2005-2009) on the impact of education and employment on the recidivism of 6,561 former offenders in Indiana. Different types of offenders (i.e. violent, non-violent, sex offenders, drug offenders) were included in the study. The study outcomes regarding the efficacy of education on recidivism and employment rates among the different types of prisoners included.

- Former prisoners who recidivated were most frequently African American males who were unemployed, underemployed, and/or under-educated, and young.
- The most important predictors of recidivism were the former prisoners' age, education, and employment.
- Former prisoners' level of education had a "simultaneous effect" on both employment and recidivism.
- Former prisoners' ability to sustain employment also was a factor in determining recidivism.
- Previous offenders with less than a high school education had higher recidivism rates and recidivated faster than those with higher levels of education.
- Sex offenders had the highest recidivism rate than any other type of criminal regardless of educational level.

Nally et al., (2012) concluded:

Results of this study have clearly shown that uneducated (or under-educated) offenders would encounter a variety of challenges to find a job and to maintain that job, if employed, uneducated (or under-educated) offenders are likely to be re-incarcerated after release from the prison due to their inadequacy in education and employability. (p. 26)

The authors indicated that participation in correctional education and vocational training programs are important for helping inmates obtain and maintain employment that can act as a buffer to reduce recidivism. Researchers found more job-specific postsecondary courses, including some vocational training programs in various fields such bookkeeping, carpentry, etc. allow for inmates to earn certificates in those industries (Nally et al. 2012).

Regardless of the level of incarceration, participants who completed postsecondary education programs recidivated less than those with only a GED. Westervelt (2015) examined 30-years of research on effectiveness of prison education programs and found that inmates who participated in correctional education programs, regardless of the type (e.g., GED preparation, vocational training or higher education), reduced their recidivism rate by 13%. Those who participated in college programs reduced their recidivism rate 16%. He also found that high risk (violent offenders) who completed postsecondary education programs were less likely to recidivate than those who had obtained a GED.

Westervelt (2015) found the direct costs of housing prisoners resulted in between four- and five-dollar savings for every dollar spent on inmate education (Westervelt, 2015). Bidwell (2013) stated that educational programs in prison can cost between \$1,400 and \$1,744 per inmate. These figures represent a cost savings between \$8,700 and \$9,700 for each former inmate who is re-incarcerated. Despite the research that has supported the efficacy of prison education to reduce recidivism, the percentage of state expenditures for prison education has been reduced from 33.0% in 1982 to 29% in 2010 (Bidwell, 2013).

Cost-effectiveness of Educating Inmates

Researchers have found that providing inmates with education is cost effective at all levels, especially at the postsecondary level and vocational training because without this level of education and training, inmates are impeded in their ability to obtain jobs paying a livable wage (Davis et al., 2014; Taylor, 2015). Taylor (2015), dean of correctional education at Walla Walla Community College for more than 20 years, recognized that everyone wants to reduce the prison population and recidivism rates. However, she found that

We want and expect released prisoners to become law-abiding, taxpaying, contributing members of our communities. That will not happen without interventions that address the issues that contributed to their poor decisions. Education is a cost-effective intervention that puts prisoners on a different path that generates hope and employability. (para. 3)

Community College: A Brief History

The community college has over a century of existence and growth beginning with the first college in Joliet, Illinois in 1901 (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Coley, 2000). During the early years, community colleges grew in their numbers and academic offerings. These academic programs and courses have, in many cases, been a direct response to the needs of the community. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2017), “No other segment of higher education is more responsive to its community and workforce needs than the community college” (n.p.). Geller (2001) finds during its early history, community colleges were named junior colleges, viewed as part of the K-12 system, and seen as an extension of the four-year colleges between the years of 1900–1930s. During this time period, community colleges offered liberal arts education. During the depression era, community colleges offered job training in the vocational areas in response to the need to train thousands of unemployed workers. According to Trainor (2015), community colleges expanded their offerings in response to this

need including programs in certain professions such as business, accounting, civil engineering, nursing, marketing, and finance.

The second stage of growth and development of community colleges was the junior college phase in which these colleges were considered extensions of the four-year institutions. This phase occurred from the 1930s to the 1950s. The United States Department of education's (n.d.) liberal policies under the Truman administration created opportunities for more diverse students to attend college at the expense of the federal government. This policy is commonly named the GI bill. The GI Bill spurred opportunities for more people to obtain a college education as a direct benefit of serving in the armed services. It provided financial support for tuition and a monthly living allotment. In addition, the economic growth after World War II created a demand for more skilled workers, and community colleges continued to offer job training programs (AACC, 2017). Trainor (2015) acknowledged that World War II veterans and Korean veterans flooded community colleges resulting in an increase in the number of community colleges.

During the third stage of development and growth, the Community College Act of 1965 established the comprehensive community college as separate and distinct from four-year institutions. By the 1960s, community colleges experienced unprecedented growth as a result of the baby boomers' enrollments, open enrollment, Civil Rights Movement, GI Bill, the strong economy, the need for a trained workforce, and the national desire to have educational opportunities for all (Coley, 2000). Trainor (2015) reported community colleges were opening at a rate of one per week during this period. As of 2008, the latest date for which information was available, the number of community colleges had increased to 1,045, excluding their branch campuses (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008).

Community colleges continued to innovate in other ways. According to Trainor (2015), community colleges became racially integrated at a faster pace than four-year institutions. In addition to expanding enrollments to include racial minority groups, community colleges were enrolling

... working-class White men and women; non-traditional adult students; and returning combat veterans. Thanks to these efforts, community colleges now board African American, Latino/a, and immigrant enrollment rates that roughly parallel these groups' representation in American society as a whole. (Trainor, 2015, pp. 4-5)

Community colleges accommodate diverse student populations through innovative courses and course formats (i.e. on-line, blended, hybrid, on ground, service learning), supportive services, and counseling (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Trainor, 2015).

Community colleges have entered a fourth major phase of their existence. Community colleges are responding to the changing economy by providing courses and programs to retrain the workforce, provide adult education, and community courses. Community colleges cite as their reason for existence is to provide open access to all (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Community colleges provide a pathway to postsecondary education for many individuals who may not be able to attend a baccalaureate college or university. (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). This pathway links all of today's community colleges to baccalaureate colleges of universities through articulation agreements. Articulation agreements are "formal agreements (or some would call a partnership) between two or more Colleges and Universities documenting the transfer policies for a specific academic program or degree in general" (College Transfer.Net, n.d, para. 1)

Each community college has its own mission, yet they share the same goal of providing open access to all people and service to the community. They have a tradition of open access admissions and charge lower tuition and fees than baccalaureate colleges and universities

(AACC, 2017; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Beyond offering credit and noncredit classes to prepare students for college level courses, community colleges serve as partners within the community through civic engagement endeavors, business and civic partnerships, and public use of their facilities. Contardo and Tolbert (2008) stress the important role of community colleges in post-release postsecondary education by stating, “Community colleges are uniquely situated within local communities and often have extensive access to potential employers and community services that could aid inmates in their post-release transition” (p. 13).

Economic Impact of Community College Education

Community colleges play an important role in the higher education system, the community, and the United States as a whole. Community college students who transfer to four-year institutions are as competitive as those who start at four-year colleges (Coley, 2000). Students have more opportunities to transfer to a selective college than they would have if they had enrolled directly from high school. Community colleges’ certificates and degrees provide economic advantages compared to those who solely possess a high school diploma (Coley, 2000). A comprehensive review of research by the National Library of Education (Coley, 2000), found that community colleges are effective at working with students with modest abilities and unclear career goals.

The AACC commissioned The Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI) in 2014 to research the influence of the nation’s community colleges on the United States’ economy, students’ economic outlook, and national social services costs. The EMSI conducted over 1,200 economic impact studies for educational institutions across the United States, Canada, the U.K., and Australia. The EMSI used its latest, updated economic impact model to conduct the study. The study resulted in the following results.

Social Perspective

- Society's return on its investment in community colleges will benefit \$46.4 billion in savings related to reduced crime, decrease in social services, lower unemployment benefits.
- Society can expect to receive \$1.1 trillion in students' additional income over their working lifetime.
- Former students saved taxpayers an additional \$19.2 billion dollars in state and federal government's funded social services programs.

Taxpayer Perspective

- One dollar in federal, state, and local tax monies devoted to community colleges in 2012 yielded the cumulative value of \$25.90 in benefits for taxpayers, with these benefits continuing as long as the former students remained in the workforce.
- Every dollar that taxpayers spend resulted in \$6.80 in benefits in 2012, resulting a return of \$5.80 representing an annual rate of return of 14.3%.

National Economy Perspective

- Community college graduates increase employers' output which increases employees' incomes and improves the nation's economy.
- All former students employed in 2012 contributed \$806.4 billion in added income to the nation's economy
- The 146,500 international students enrolled in community colleges in 2012 contributed \$1.5 billion to the nation's income.
- International students' expenditures on their personal items, food, accommodations, transportation, and social activities added approximately \$1.5 billion to the nation's income.
- The total impact of community colleges on the nation's economy in 2012 was \$809 billion, about 5.4% of the United States Gross Domestic Product.

Student perspective

- Students increase their incomes by earning certificates and degrees from community colleges.
- On average, former community college students with an associate degree in 2012 earned approximately \$42,900 annually.

- This income was approximately \$10,700 more than a worker with a high school diploma (EMSI, 2014; Rothwell, 2015).

The researchers found students' lifetime earnings and the employers' increased output in 2012 benefited taxpayers for a total of \$285.7 billion dollars. Former students saved taxpayers an additional \$19.2 billion dollars in state and federal government funded social services programs. Other research commissioned by the United States Treasury found that an investment in higher education provided additional benefits including increasing job opportunities and a higher education increases the nation's ability to compete internationally. People with higher education are more likely to have jobs that provide additional benefits, such as health and dental insurance, paid vacation benefits (Eberly & Martin, 2012). Higher education supports income mobility that contributes to the United States economic growth and has a positive influence on future generations. Children born into families whose parents have not obtained a college degree have a 45% chance of remaining in lower income levels. People with college degrees have less than 29% chance of staying at lower income levels (Eberly & Martin, 2012).

Rothwell (2015) found other benefits of a higher education extend beyond being a college graduate. Approximately 68% of community college alumni remain within the geographical boundaries of the college and contribute to the local economy area, compared to 42% of alumni of baccalaureate institutions. Highly educated individuals spend more money in the local economy than those with less education. Local and state governments receive more income as the result of college graduates paying increased property and income taxes. Cook (2015) found a college education helps people withstand economic crises better. According to the United States Department of the Treasury and the Department of Education (2012):

Higher education is a critical mechanism for socioeconomic advancement among aspiring individuals and an important driver of economic mobility in our society. Moreover, a well-educated workforce is vital to our nation's future economic growth. American companies and businesses require a highly skilled work force to meet the demand of today's increasingly competitive global economy. (p. 2)

Characteristics of Today's Community College Students

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2017), the student enrollment at community colleges nationwide was 6.7 million, representing 39% of the postsecondary undergraduate enrollment in the United States. The background characteristics of students enrolled in community colleges provides support for the diversity present on the campuses. Students ages 18 to their early 20s comprise half of the student population in community colleges (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). The average age of community college students is 29 years.

The majority of the student population in community colleges is White (55%), with African Americans (15%), Hispanic (19%), Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (6%), American Indian or Alaska Native (1%) included in the minority students who comprise 43% of the enrollments (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Minorities are expected to constitute the majority of the K-12 population by 2023 leading with Hispanics and African Americans second (CBS News, 2008). If birth rates among minorities remain consistent, immigration rates among Hispanics and Asians continue, and the birth rates among non-Hispanic Caucasians continue to decline, the majority of the United States population is expected to be minorities by 2042 (CBS News, March 5, 2008).

The NCES (2017) reported that in fall 2015, the majority (76%) of public community colleges full-time enrollments were young adults under 25 years of age. The 25- to 34-year-old

group constituted 15% of the full-time student population. The 35 and over student full-time population comprised 8% of the full-time enrollments.

Enrollment Patterns in Community Colleges

The Lumina Foundation has embarked on an ambitious goal of having at least 60% of working adults between the ages of 25 to 64 years to attain a college degree or a postsecondary credential by 2025 (O’Shaughnessy, 2013). In 2009, President Obama established a national goal of having a greater number of community colleges graduates than any other nation (Cook & Hartle, 2011). This initiative can prepare students to enter the workforce with certificates and/or degrees by the year 2020. However, neither of these goals can be fully realized as long as a significant segment of society is “left behind.”

According to the Lumina Foundation report (Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, 2015), 65% of all jobs by 2020 will require postsecondary education and training. This figure represents a 28% increase from 1973. Additionally, the Lumina Foundation reported that the United States would experience challenges in increasing employees with the requisite postsecondary training necessary to fill the position. The Lumina Foundation report stressed that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, minority students, adult learners, and nontraditional students often face practical obstacles to getting an education and are harder to train using conventional teaching techniques. The result is an increasing labor shortage caused by the slowing pace of postsecondary attainment and the quickening pace of educational demand (p. 15).

Impact and Effectiveness of Community Colleges

Community colleges play an important role in the higher education system, the community, and the United States as a whole. Community college students who transfer to four-year institutions are as competitive as those who start a four-year colleges (Coley, 2000). Students have more opportunities to transfer to a selective college than they would have if they had enrolled directly from high school. Community colleges' certificates and degrees provide economic advantages compared to those who solely possess a high school diploma (Coley, 2000). A comprehensive review of research by the National Library of Education (Coley, 2000) found that community colleges are effective at working with students with modest abilities and unclear career goals.

Persistence and the African American Male Student

The disparity in enrollment and persistence among African American men enrolled in community colleges continue to persist. African American men represent 4.3% of all students enrolled in higher education (Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 174). The most recent data shows African American male enrollments have increased to 5% of student enrollments in community college (Aspirations to Achievement, 2014, p. 7).

Hines and McCoy (2013) conducted a study that focused on the academic success of African American males in high school. They examined ecological factors that influenced academic achievement and persistence among African American males. Their findings indicated that the father's educational attainment and family structure were likely to influence academic achievement of the participants. Hines and McCoy (2013) also found that the father's expectations for his son and living in a two-parent home influenced the academic development of African American males. Male students who did not have a father in the home, but who found

male role models among relatives, teachers, friends, or their absentee fathers tended to have positive academic achievement. While this study was not about community colleges and African American males, it did raise questions about outside influences that African American male community college students bring to college.

Harris and Wood (2013) supported the need for research on factors other than academe that may hinder African American male academic success and persistence to graduation. Their review of literature and research published from 1998-2012 found five domains outside of academe that affected African males' persistence to graduation. The domains were (a) academic, (b) environmental, (c) non-cognitive, (d) institutional, and (e) social.

Academic domain. The authors found that men of color (African American, Latino, Native American, and Asian) tend to be less integrated into the academic arena with the exception of whenever they received an incomplete or repeated a course for a higher grade or met with the faculty.

The environmental domain includes all factors outside of the college that directly affect the engagement of men of color, such as working off campus, family commitments, crime, poverty, and financial need: "African American men leave college more than other men due to personal reasons" (Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 178).

Non-cognitive domain. The emotional and affective responses of men of color to the social contexts and interactions that occur in the college. These responses are affected by their self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and their identity within the college.

Institutional domain. Community colleges' policies and practices, student services, and faculty helped men of color to experience greater integration in their community colleges compared to those enrolled in proprietary institutions. The value of support services highlights

the importance of academic advising services targeted to freshman orientation courses for credit, monitoring of student attendance, and required tutoring (Harris & Wood, 2013, p. 180).

Social domain. Harris and Wood (2013) reviewed the literature and research on the social integration of men of color within the community college campus. They found that the studies reviewed (i.e., Tinto, 1993, Bush & Bush, 2010, Wood, 2014) indicated that social integration does not have a positive effect on the success of men of color. Another study found social integration has a negative effect on African American men's persistence (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 181).

Wood and Palmer (2013) investigated the personal goals of African Americans males in community colleges using data from the 2004 and 2006 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS). Self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (as cited in Wood & Palmer, 2013) was used as the theoretical framework to understand students' goals. This theory essentially asserted that given the opportunity, one will act to satisfy one of three human beings needs (develop social bonds/relationships, autonomy, and competence). They found that African American males have five personal goals: "having steady work, being financially well off, being a community leader, having leisure time, and having children" (Wood & Palmer, 2013, p. 234). Other factors that promote African American male community college students' success and persistence can be categorized as demographic, academic, environmental, psychological, and institutional variables. Table 2 presents the factors associated with each of these categories.

Table 2: Factors that Promote African American Male Community College Persistence

CATEGORIES	FACTORS
Demographic	Age Students' precollege academic success Educational level of parents Educational goals Higher education aspirations
Academic	Time spent studying Lower absenteeism Enrollment intensity (Full time/Part time) Academic integration Positive interactions with faculty
Environmental	Lack of money Familial responsibilities Encouragement from others
Psychological	Strong sense of belonging to the institution Satisfied with collegiate experience Committed to academic goals Perceive academic pursuits are worthwhile endeavors Prioritization of academic and familial responsibilities
Institutional	College personnel, policies, and practices that promote persistence Identification of students who are at-risk early Monitoring at-risk students' overtime Mentoring students in need of guidance

Source: Adapted from Woods & Williams, 2013

Perrakis (2008), studied 4,333 students, including African American and Caucasian males and females, enrolled in all nine colleges in the Los Angeles Community College District. They had similar GPAs in high school. Representation of each ethnic/racial group was less than 5%. The study results showed that these men ages 20 to 26 had similar insecurities about belonging on campus. In addition, the study showed other factors were significant for both genders such as “Race, age, high school GPA, calculus completion, reasons for enrollment, and dedication to persistence” (p. 19).

Other research supported Perrakis' findings in the “Aspiration to Achievement: Men of Color and Community College” (2014) report. The 2012 Community College Survey of Student

Engagement was completed by more than 145,000 students between 2010 and 2012, and 30 focus groups were conducted with Black, Latino and White male students. Their research has similar findings. The aspirations of African American men were high, yet their success and persistence lagged.

Post-Release Education and Training

Post release education and training improves former inmates' opportunities to avoid returning to jails, prisons, violating parole or probation. Several studies reveal the success of post-release participants in postsecondary education. Duguid (1997) found those who participated in education had a lower recidivism rate than the rate predicted for them. Grade point averages were another positive predictor of lower recidivism rates. Duguid found those with a higher grade point average were more likely to continue their education post-release. Anderson (1981) found a strong relationship between post-release participants enrolled in GED or PSE. These participants successfully completed their programs. Ayers, Duquid, S., Montaque, and Wolowidnyk (1980) found 70% of the PSE participants who enrolled after release credit programs were able to complete their programs. The United States Department of Justice (2018) and Moses & Smith (2007) data of post-released inmates enrolled in education programs offered in Washington state preliminarily found of the 24 participants, none recidivated or committed misdemeanors after one year compared to 8 of the 64 in the control group. The participants in the postsecondary program had not committed misdemeanors or felonies during the first year compared to the 16 of the 64 in the control group. While the authors suggested that the results were preliminary and the number of participants was low, the evaluators attributed the success of the former inmates to the postsecondary program.

The historical increase in incarceration rates and associated rising costs have had a negative influence on individuals, the country's minority communities, social institutions, community health (Shannon, Uggen, Thompson, Schnittker, & Maswoglia, 2011) and the current trend to release nonviolent prisoners (Petersilia & Cullen, 2014). The United States has approximately 5% of the world's population, but about 25% of the world's prisoners (Alexander, 2012; American Civil Liberties Union, 2011; Pettus-Davis & Epperson, 2014). The majority of the prison population includes minorities along with people suffering from poverty and/or mental illness (Kerby, 2012; Pettis-Davis & Epperson, 2014; "The Sentencing Project," 2017).

African American men constitute a large share of those incarcerated. (Alexander, 2010, 2012; Pettus-Davis & Epperson 2014). According to Alexander (2010), three out of four African American men from mainly poor urban communities can expect to have contact with the criminal justice system during their lives. Approximately one in every three African American men born in 2001 can expect to serve some time in prison ("The Sentencing Project, Criminal Justice Facts," 2017). Other research has found that not all felons serve prison time; rather, they serve their time in a variety of ways including short jail time and then complete their sentence on probation, while others start and complete their sentences on probation (Shannon et al., 2011). In 2011, over 7.2 million adults were on parole, probation, or serving time in jails, or prisons (Shannon et al., 2011). Without appropriate educational opportunities and other social services, formerly incarcerated individuals are rearrested within five years for new crimes (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). Community colleges are in a unique position to fill the educational gap that can help decrease the recidivism rate and associated social costs.

Self-efficacy of Students of Color Enrolled at Community Colleges

Limited research exists on self-efficacy of African American males enrolled in community college. Thomas, Wolters, Horn, and Kennedy (2014) indicated that African American students generally enter college with lower self-efficacy than their Caucasian counterparts. Depending on their academic success, their self-efficacy can be either increased (with successful academic outcomes) or decreased (with poor academic outcomes; Thomas et al., 2014). Research by Wood, Hilton, and Johnson (2014), examined self-efficacy among students of color (African American, Caucasian, Latino/a, and Asian) using four measures: faculty-student interactions, meeting with an academic advisor, studying in the college library, and using the internet to access school library resources. Wood et al. (2014) found differential effects across the racial/ethnic groups for self-efficacy and integration with faculty, academic advisors, use of the college library and internet access. They suggested that college administrators and faculty should not use a monolithic approach, instead students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds should be considered separately, with program introduced to improve self-efficacy and academic integration.

Self-efficacy and Student Success

Researchers have discussed the role of self-efficacy in predicting student success and has shown that self-efficacy has a positive role in determining student success (Aguayo et al., 2011; Bong, 2011; Gore, 2006; Vuong, Brown-Welty & Tracz, 2010) Other research demonstrated self-efficacy has a positive relationship with student success in completing homework and developing credible study activities and patterns (Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992; Pajares & Miller, 1994; Schunk, 1991; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). Thomas, Iventosch, and Rohwer (1987) found self-efficacy was a better predictor of academic outcomes

than academic aptitude or study habits for all students junior high through college. Moulton, Brown, and Lent (1991), using a meta-analysis, found a strong relationship existed between student self-efficacy and academic outcomes. Other research findings showed that student academic outcomes were indirectly affected by self-efficacy in several areas, such as boosting student ability to adjust to college (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). Self-efficacy had an indirect influence on student ability to create goals and establish a purpose in life (Brown, et al., 2008; Dewtiz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009). Student writing ability also benefited indirectly from self-efficacy (Collins & Bissell, 2004), and indirectly enhanced student reduction of stress and anxiety (Abd-El-Fattah, 2005; Torres & Solberg, 2001; Zajocova, Lynch & Espenshade, 2005).

Greene, Marti, and McClenney (2008) surveyed 3,143 first year African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, and Caucasian American students enrolled in community colleges in Florida. The results indicated that African American students were more engaged with their academic work but demonstrated lower academic outcomes than Caucasians. Hispanic student showed higher levels of engagement on the mental activities factor but earned lower grades than Caucasians. These researchers suggested African Americans' self-report of engagement may reflect an Effort-Outcome Gap (EOG). This gap requires African Americans to make greater effort to overcome academic and institutional barriers to persist and reach their educational goals. This effort is greater because African Americans are academically more "at risk" than Caucasians who face limited institutional barriers and reach academic goals with comparatively less effort and engagement. Greene, Marti, and McClenney (2008) suggested possible reasons that African Americans and other minority students report working harder yet received lesser academic outcomes. These reasons included being the first in their families to

attend college, began college academically under-prepared and need financial assistance (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998), tended to have to balance work and family responsibilities (Horn & Premo, 1995).

Okech and Harrington (2002) studied Black consciousness, self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy among 120 African American men enrolled at Texas Southern University, an historical Black university. The participants ranged in age from 12 to 60 years. The largest group of students were seniors (37%), followed by freshmen (35%), sophomores (20%), and juniors (8%). Okech and Harrington found a significant relationship between Black consciousness and academic self-efficacy. African American men with the highest level of Black consciousness (stage 4) had higher academic self-efficacy than African American men who had lower Black conscious levels (stage 1, 2 or 3). Positive role modeling helped African American men eliminate internalizing stereotypes by Whites.

Thomas, Wolters, Horn, and Kennedy (2014) studied persistence among 139 African American students, including freshmen (6%), sophomores (28%), juniors (36%), and seniors (33%), enrolled at a large urban university. The researchers examined four factors — campus involvement, faculty mentorship, motivational beliefs (self-efficacy), and sense of belonging. Researchers verified persistence through students' actual enrollment at the university. The results of a multiple regression analysis revealed utility value was a significant predictor of persistence reported by the students. The logistic regression analysis provided evidence that self-efficacy was a negative predictor of actual student persistence, although this relationship was not statistically significant.

Conclusion

Chapter Two has presented a comprehensive review of literature regarding prisoner education and the community college's role in helping people who have been incarcerated gain an education that can help them become gainfully employed. The literature supports the role of education in helping reduce recidivism among individuals who have had contact with the criminal justice system. An education can help these individuals improve their self-efficacy as theorized by Bandura. The methods that were used to collect and analyze the data from interviews with African American males who are attending a community college and have had contact with the criminal justice system are presented in Chapter Three. The results of the analyses and the themes that emerged from the data are included in Chapter Four, with Chapter Five presenting an interpretation of the findings.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH APPROACH

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the methods that were used to collect and analyze the data needed to address the research questions established for this study. The topics covered here include a restatement of the purpose of the study, the research questions, research design, setting for the study, participants, instruments, data collection methods, data analyses, ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness, limitations of the study, and chapter summary. Each of these topics is presented separately.

Restatement of the Purpose

The qualitative, phenomenological research study examined internal and external factors that may have an influence on persistence through graduation or transfer of African American men who had been involved with the criminal justice system. Internal factors are the background characteristics that students bring to the college. External factors are the services and support offered by the college and its personnel.

Research Questions

The overarching question addressed in this study is:

What internal and external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?

Two sub-questions were used to address the overarching question:

1. What internal factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?
2. What external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?

Research Design

A qualitative, phenomenological research design was used in this study. A phenomenological study is an in-depth exploration of the “common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the lived experience could be a phenomenon (i.e., attending a community college after release from the criminal justice system). The purpose of a phenomenological study is to explore the essence of the experience and provide a composite description of “what they experienced and how they experienced it” (Moustakas as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75).

Phenomenological research can take two forms: hermeneutical (Van Manen as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018) or empirical, transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hermeneutical phenomenological research focuses on investigating the lived experience (phenomenology) and then providing an interpretation of participants’ responses to the semi-structured interview questions collected from the participants (van Manen as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). Conversely, empirical transcendental phenomenology is an examination of participants’ lived experiences of a common phenomenon (e.g., attending community college after being released from incarceration; Moustakas as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). For the present study, empirical, transcendental phenomenological research design was used.

According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research has a structure and procedure. The methods the methods and procedures for an organized and systematic study in phenomenological research include:

- Discovering a topic and question rooted in autobiographical meanings and values as well as involving social meanings and significance;
- Conducting a comprehensive review of the professional and research literature;
- Constructing a set of criteria to locate appropriate co-researchers [participants];
- Providing co-researchers [participants] with instructions on the nature and purpose of the investigation and developing an agreement that includes obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and delineating the responsibilities of the primary researcher and research participants, consistent with the ethical principles of research;
- Developing a set of questions or topics to guide the interview processes;
- Conducting and recording a lengthy person-to-person interview that focuses on a bracketed topic and question. A follow-up interview may also be needed; and
- Organizing and analyzing the data to facilitate development of individual textural and structural descriptions, a composite textural description, a composite structural description, and a synthesis of textural and structural meanings and essences. (pp. 103–104)

Rationale for Qualitative Research

The theoretical basis for this research was the need to determine what factors help retain African American men in college who have had a relationship with the criminal justice system. African American men are among the most significant group to have the expectation of being confronted by the police and the criminal justice system than any other group in the country. Additionally, one in three African American men can expect to have a relationship with the criminal justice system during their lifetimes. Most of these men are arrested due to non-violent, drug-related crimes. Their incarceration disrupts the local communities from which they come and cost the American people an inordinate amount of money to be housed in prisons. The cost

of maintaining a prisoner for one year is more than the average cost of a community college degree.

Qualitative research seeks to understand how people interpret their experiences. Furthermore, qualitative research that seeks to understand a system or a case, the study is a case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). All qualitative research requires the researcher to construct reality based on the meanings the participants give their interaction with a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research allows the researcher to focus on “societal critique in order to raise consciousness and empower people to bring about change” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). According to Yin (2014) Case studies allow researchers to answer “how” and “why” questions which make them the best suited design than other qualitative research designs.

Additionally, qualitative research explains how the unanticipated and the targeted outcomes intersect. Therefore, open-ended field work is most useful as opposed to quantitative research (Patton, 2015, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research’s key element is interested in understanding what and how individuals make meaning or sense of the phenomenon in which they are involved (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Crotty (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) emphasized that this meaning “is not discovered but constructed. Meaning does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it.... Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (p. 24).

Setting for the Study

The study was conducted at a large Midwestern urban, comprehensive community college with multiple campuses located in a metropolitan region. According to the college’s web site, the college was founded in 1967 through a legislative act and enrolled students for the first time in fall 1969. The college has five campuses located within the county in industrial, rural,

and metropolitan areas where the largest percentage of the state's technical and skilled occupations are located. The college serves a population in the county of 2.3 million people and places an emphasis on technical, occupational, and career programs, as well as traditional college and university transfer programs. The college is located within close proximity of other competing postsecondary educational institutions. The college has a 10-year accreditation from the Commission on Institutions of the Higher Learning Commission. Some of the specific programs (e.g., nursing, occupational therapy assistant) have specialized certifications. The college has 322 staff members. The student teacher ratio is 51:1.

According to the College's Annual Community Report 2017-2018, the College's employees and students contribute approximately 1.6 billion dollars in income to the region. Every dollar from state and local taxes invested in the College returns \$3.30, and the cost savings associated with corrections and welfare was estimated at \$480 for most students who graduate from the College.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES], 2017), the college has a diverse student body representing various minority groups. These include 58% African American, 22% Caucasian, 10% representing 2 or more races, 1% Asian, 2% Hispanic, and 4% unknown. For the 2017-18 academic year, the college had no American Indian/Alaskan or Hawaiian natives enrolled. and 1% American Indian/Alaskan. The College enrolled 16,822 students with 20% enrolled full-time. Approximately, 91% received the Pell Grant and 29% were receiving federal loans during the 2016-2017 academic year according to the latest data available. The median debt for students was \$10,702, and the median debt for dropouts was \$4,000. The cost of attending the college, including tuition and books, was \$4,558, which is below the state average of \$3,772 (NCES, 2017).

Participants

The participants in the study included African American males from 18 to 30 years of age, who have had at least one encounter with the criminal justice system. The participants could not be on active probation or on parole at the time of the study. The inclusion criteria for the study included (1) being an African American male college student, (2) being enrolled full or part-time in a community college, (3) having obtained a GED or high school diploma prior to enrolling in the community college, and (4) having had at least one encounter with the criminal justice system, including arrest, conviction, or relapse. Participants were excluded if they were on parole or probation and if they had obtained a bachelor's or graduate degree prior or during incarceration.

Sample

Participants were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used to obtain participants who have similar characteristics and are able to provide rich information to address the research questions (Patton, 2015). In purposeful sampling, the inclusion criterion is determined before beginning recruitment of participants for the study. The use of purposeful sampling does not provide population validity. Instead, it is used to obtain a thorough and in-depth understanding of the experiences of the participants (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2014). This study purposefully sampled participants who met the criteria for the study that included being African American, male, enrolled in a community college, and had a previous encounter with the criminal justice system. The participants could not be on parole or probation at the time of the study.

Determining the appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is an important consideration. Choosing participants who have meet the inclusion criteria and who can give in-

depth information on their experiences is more important than obtaining a large, more diverse sample (Seidman, 2013). A small and purposive group of participants in a qualitative study should be used to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Sorensen, 2007). According to Seidman (2013), the number of participants is dependent on reaching saturation in the interviews.

Saturation is defined as the time in the data collection process when additional interviews do not yield any new information (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Padgett, 2016). Researchers (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017) conducted a series of experiments to determine the number of interviews that were needed to achieve saturation. A sample of 60 participants, responses to interview questions became similar after 12 interviews, with no new data offered (Guest et al., 2006; Guest et al., 2017).

Materials for the Study

The data that were collected for the study include responses to semi-structured interview questions, information obtained on a short demographic survey, and researcher field notes. The semi-structured interview questions were based on the review of literature and were used to address the two research questions posed for the study. The semi-structured interviews typically use four general types of questions: contextual, perceptual, demographics, and theoretical. Eight semi-structured interview questions were used for the study. Four of the questions addressed the first research question, and the remaining four interview questions answered the second research question. To ensure that the questions are appropriate, the researcher asked three counselors at the community college to review the questions. The counselors were asked to provide suggestions to improve the interview questions (see Appendix A).

A short demographic survey was developed to obtain personal information from the participants. The purpose of this survey was to ensure that the participants met the inclusion criteria for the study and provide a profile of the participants in the study. The survey items used forced-choice response categories and some short answer responses (see Appendix B). During the interviews, the researcher used a notebook to record any anecdotal information that arose during the interviews. These notes included body language, facial expressions, and comments before starting the recording and after completing the interview. These notes are included as part of the data analysis.

Data-Collection Methods

After receiving approval from the Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher posted a flyer on the community college website and the bulletin boards at three campuses of the community college. In addition, the researcher distributed flyers to instructors and counselors at the three campuses. Students who were interested in participating were asked to contact the researcher by email or telephone. The researcher discussed the research and screened the participants to determine if they met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. If the participants were interested in participating in the study, the researcher made an appointment at a mutually agreeable time and location for the interviews.

At the interviews, the researcher asked participants to read, review, and sign the informed consent form. After signing the informed consent, the researcher began the interview. The interviews were audio recorded to ensure that the participants' responses were accurate. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure their identity would be protected. After the interviews were completed, the audio recordings were transcribed by a certified transcriptionist. The researcher reviewed the transcripts for accuracy and sent them to the

participants for member checking. The participants were asked to review the transcripts and make any corrections, deletions, or additions that they felt would better represent their experiences at the community college. The participants were asked to return the transcripts to the researcher in one week. Any transcript not returned was considered correct as written.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

According to Yin (2014), it is helpful to start an analytic strategy by seeking “patterns, insights, or concepts that seem promising” (p. 135). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recognized data analysis as the “process used to answer your research question(s). Merriam and Tisdell outlined the process of data analysis that begins with collection of the data, transcribing the data, reading and rereading the transcripts, constructing categories by coding statements in the data. Next, data was sorted using the codes and categorized by assigning codes or themes or category names. Throughout this process, the interviews were reread to assure that the categories were correct. Categories must be responsive to the researcher’s questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Additionally, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stressed these categories should meet five criteria: (a) responsive, (b) exhaustive, (c) mutually exclusive, (d) sensitizing, and (e) conceptually congruent.

The researcher used several analytic techniques to analyze the data and categories by matching patterns and clustering themes. Explanation building was the second analytic technique employed. Yin (2014) acknowledged explanation building is a special form of pattern matching. However, explanation building goes beyond pattern matching by building viable explanations about the case. Researchers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Yin, 2014) stressed the importance of the researcher making sense out of the data by identifying aspects of the data that responds to the research question.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting research ethically and avoiding bias is the responsibility of the researcher. Qualitative researchers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014) emphasized the importance of protecting the participants, avoiding and/or ignoring some findings over the preference for others. Yin (2014) emphasized the importance a researcher testing his/her tolerance for contrary findings by reporting them to colleagues and requesting they provide alternative explanations and suggestions for data collections. Yin stated, “If the quest for contrary findings can produce documentable rebuttals, the likelihood of bias will have been reduced” (p. 76).

The research was designed to understand how and why African American men with a “criminal” background can achieve college success. The participants’ rights were safeguarded by having the participants read and sign an informed consent form that includes the following sections that (a) explain the purpose of the study, (b) convey the participants rights and protections, (c) assure participants that their confidentiality will be maintained, (d) indicate that their information will not be released without their written consent, (e) ensure that the data will be secured for seven years and then destroyed appropriately, (f) explain that Ferris State University Institutional Review Board, its agents, and appropriate federal agencies may review the records, and (g) indicate that the researcher will be the only one to have access to this information. The copy of the informed consent form retained by the participant included contact information for the researcher and the Ferris State Institutional Review Board if any questions arise.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is similar to reliability and validity that is important in quantitative research. According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), trustworthiness in qualitative research involves four criteria:

1. Credibility (equates to internal validity),
2. Transferability (in preference to external validity/generalizability),
3. Dependability (in preference to reliability), and
4. Confirmability (in preference to objectivity (p. 64)

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), trustworthiness of qualitative research depends on which sections are applicable to the reader's situation. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the objective of trustworthiness is to ensure that the results of the study are appropriate in a phenomenological study. To ensure that this qualitative study has the necessary rigor to address the research questions, specific guidelines need to be used to determine the trustworthiness of the process used in the research.

Credibility

Guba and Lincoln (1981) asserted that credibility is a necessary part of verifying trustworthiness. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), credibility is determining the extent to which the study outcomes mirror reality. Credibility is concerned with being consistent and providing support that the study was done properly and ethically (Merriam, 2009). Credibility for this study was established by having participants complete member checking, determining that the researcher's interpretations reflect the participants' responses, and developing deep descriptions of the African American community college students' experiences with the

phenomenon of attending college after encounters with the criminal justice system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As part of meeting the requirements for credibility, the researcher recorded field notes and made entries on a regular basis to confirm the findings.

Transferability

According to Merriam (2009), transferability is defined as the determination that the findings of the present study are applicable to other settings or contexts. Transferability is a form of external validity that has been a source of disagreement among phenomenological researchers (Beck, 1994). Transferability is also similar to generalizability, but phenomenological research is not concerned with generalizing the results of the study beyond the sample that was used in the study (Waters, 2015). Providing a rich, deep description of the lived experiences of African American male community college students is the goal of this phenomenological research study. The patterns and themes that may emerge from interview responses may be similar to experiences of other African American male community college students who have had encounters with the criminal justice system. Because pattern and theme analysis in phenomenological research is subjective, generalizability of the findings may be limited. Determining the extent to which the findings can be transferred may be based on the reader and not the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). They also suggested that the researcher would probably be unaware of the contexts to which the reader might try to apply the findings.

Dependability

Dependability is the extent to which the research process is able to complete the study as planned and conducted. This process is similar to the stability found in quantitative research. Polit and Beck (2016) argued that dependability indicated that the findings are representative of

the lived experiences associated with African American men enrolling in college following an encounter with the criminal justice system. The findings as described by the researcher do not reflect her biases or opinion. To avoid any concerns regarding bias, an audit trail can be established by the researcher. The audit trail documents the timing of the research activities and procedures that were used to contact potential participants, collect the data, and analyze the results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Confirmability

The validity in a quantitative study is the ability to confirm the interpretation of the findings and does not include the researcher's opinions, biases, interests, or concerns. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In collecting and analyzing data in a qualitative study, the researcher needs to be objective, attempt to minimize bias, and be unbiased. The findings should be applicable to the situation being researched and not reflect the researcher's beliefs, theories, and biases. One method that can help in maximizing the confirmability of the study is by bracketing the biases and opinions of the researcher from the study outcomes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Another method used to support confirmability is to employ reflexivity. A reflexive journal can be used by phenomenological researchers to discuss their biases, dispositions, and assumptions that may affect research outcomes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Summary

Chapter Three discussed the components in a phenomenological research design that will be used to explain the lived experiences of African American men who are attending a community college after an encounter with the criminal justice system. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were discussed as was the procedures that would be used to recruit

participants, conduct the interviews, and analyze the results. The results of the data analysis will be presented in Chapter Four, with a discussion of the findings related to the literature review included in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter Four presents findings of the study through the depth of data collected using a qualitative phenomenological methodology. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to examine internal and external factors that may have an influence on persistence through graduation or transfer of 12 African American men who have been or currently are involved with the criminal justice system. Further, this study allowed the researcher to utilize an interview questionnaire that served as the tool through which data was collected.

The results of this qualitative study revealed that Bandura's social learning and self-efficacy theory provided a theoretical foundation that served as an important aspect of human development in the cognitive and functioning aspects of individuals. In addition, the results made known that the self-efficacy theory was prevalent throughout the process, and the following themes were identified: (a) encouragement; (b) self-enrichment; (c) social perception; (d) career aspirations; (e) improved decision-making; (f) school resources; (g) family support; (h) family matters; (i) lack of resources; (j) family and friends; and (k) overt seclusion. These themes aligned with the responses of participant with an overwhelming association that higher education, better choices, and the belief of achievement may change the stigma of African American males in a social context. Additionally, none of the participants were on parole or probation at the time of the study. The results of this qualitative study revealed that the self-efficacy theory provided a theoretical foundation that served as a significant aspect of African

American males, currently enrolled in a community college that had a previous encounter with the criminal justice system.

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological research study was to examine internal and external factors that may have an influence on persistence through graduation or transfer of African American men who have been involved with the criminal justice system. Internal factors are the background characteristics that students bring to the college. External factors are the services and support offered by the college and its personnel.

Research Questions

The results of the interviews provided information that was critical in answering the following overarching research question:

RQ: What internal and external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?

Additionally, the following sub-questions were used to address the overarching research question:

- *Sub-question 1:* What internal factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?
- *Sub-question 2:* What external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?

Overview of Participants

The participants for this study included 12 African American males from 18 to 30 years of age, who had had at least one encounter with the criminal justice system. All participants were currently actively enrolled full or part-time in a community college, had obtained a GED or high school diploma prior to enrolling in the community college, had at least one encounter with the criminal justice system, including arrest, conviction, or relapse. Research participants could not currently be on probation or parole at the time of the study or already have obtained a bachelor or graduate degree prior or during incarceration. Table 3 illustrates the demographics of each study participant, including age range, gender, education level, and year of study in college.

Table 3: Demographics of Study Participants

PARTICIPANTS	AGE	GENDER	EDUCATION LEVEL	YEAR OF STUDY
1	23	Male	High School	1 st Year
2	19	Male	High School	1 st Year
3	26	Male	High School	1 st Year
4	21	Male	High School	1 st Year
5	21	Male	High School	1 st Year
6	26	Male	GED	1 st Year
7	25	Male	High School	1 st Year
8	21	Male	High School	1 st Year
9	19	Male	High School	1 st Year
10	21	Male	High School	1 st Year
11	22	Male	High School	1 st Year
12	20	Male	High School	1 st Year

Data collection began upon approval from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the study and was initiated with contact to each participant. The solicitation of study members was

initiated by the researcher posting a flyer on the community college website and bulletin boards at three campuses of the community college. Furthermore, the researcher distributed flyers to instructors and counselors at the three campuses. Students interested in participating were asked to contact the researcher by email or telephone. Upon contact, the researcher discussed the study in addition to, screening the participant to determine if he met the criteria to participate, where an appointment was established to conduct the interview.

The research was explained, and an informed consent was provided for the research members to sign, indicating proof of voluntary participation in the study. Participants were randomly identified as Participants 1 through 12. The participants' names were not revealed to preserve privacy, with all responses coded and analyzed using Nvivo 12 software.

Study Results

The research study was thoroughly introduced, and the format of interviews explained to each participant. Additionally, the researcher explained her role in the data collection process and benefits received by serving as participants in this phenomenological study. Details of the informed consent was thoroughly stressed, which provided each participant the option of being free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make them uncomfortable and able to withdraw from the interview or study at any time. To protect identity of participants, no questions on the interview questionnaire required a response revealing such information. In addition, the researcher created a transcript from tape-recorded interview sessions to ensure the accuracy of responses in order to avoid misinterpretation. Moreover, the researcher quoted participants extensively, following the principles of phenomenology (Williams, 2014).

Eight semi-structured interview sub-questions were used for the study. Four sub-questions were utilized to address Sub-question 1, while the other four sub-questions were

utilized to answer Sub-question 2, which allowed the researcher to analyze themes that emerged from the lived experiences of 12 African American males between the age of 18 and 30, who had had at least one encounter with the criminal justice system.

Sub-question 1

The findings for Sub-question 1, *What internal factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?* were generated from the responses of twelve study participants to interview questions *1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D* on the interview questionnaire. The responses were transcribed to interview questions *1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D* from which each theme was developed:

Interview Question 1A.

Interview Question 1A asked, *Why are you enrolled at the community college?* The transcribed responses below begin with Participant 1 and end consecutively with Participant 12.

- It wasn't too far away from my house and my family and mom recommended me to go here because she took the best class that she ever took there. (Participant 1)
- Just to kind of brush up on my education, I've been away from school a lot of years, just to brush up. (Participant 2)
- After I graduated from high school, I really didn't know where I wanted to go, you know, I was really, like, lost. High school was family and they helped me through the thick and thin, you know, I didn't know what to do with myself, when I got out, high school friends pointed me in the right direction. (Participant 3)
- My mother influenced me to attend the college I'm at right now, this is the college where my mother graduated from and got her diploma. (Participant 4)
- I can't afford a university, I work too, so I got to be as close as possible to work, so I can go to school and work. (Participant 5)

- I'm enrolled in the community college to help further my education and then possibly get into a better college moving forward. I'm trying to further my education, the business field, to become hopefully an MBA, Master's in Business Administration. Hopefully get into one of those high industries and create better business opportunities for other people going forward. (Participant 6)
- I'm enrolled in a community college because of, basically trades really didn't work for me, so, a nursing program will be pretty good for me. I looked up the characteristics of the program, and I just went for it. Electricity and carpentry and things like that, I didn't really like those that much. (Participant 7)
- I wanted to, keep going to school and try to get my degree in physical therapy. (Participant 8)
- I got a scholarship to play basketball here, and I want to improve my grades, and hopefully take it to a pro level, or earn an MBA or play internationally. (Participant 9)
- I'm enrolled in the college because I wanted to make a difference in my life and, you know, be more constructive instead of negative things that I did and the lifestyle that I lived. (Participant 10)
- I'm enrolled in community college because I know that universities are expensive, so I was going to do well, I'm going to do all of my prerequisites at community college because it's a lot cheaper and then transfer over to a university to take my main courses in engineering. (Participant 11)
- I enrolled in the college to become a dental hygienist, which is a short-term goal, I want to become a dentist. (Participant 12)

Specifically, after reviewing each transcribed interview, the researcher developed a list and clustered similar topics, grouped along with classifying each into codes using descriptive wording to organize the data for preliminary analysis. Furthermore, the researcher approached the analysis of data with openness to each theme that emerged and accepted the phenomenon.

Moreover, each interview was transcribed and thoroughly reviewed to grasp a complete understanding of the responses prior to coding. The 12 responses from participants were organized by *Interview Question 1A* from which codes were developed. Codes were formed, and themes acknowledged after the categories were examined from participants' responses as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Theme Analysis: Interview Question 1A

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Family Mother	• Family	Encouragement
Advanced Education Career Aspirations	• Advancement of Education	Self-enrichment

The participants' responses related to Interview Question 1A revealed the following themes: (1) encouragement and (2) self-enrichment, which were explored individually to provide simplicity. All responses were coded and analyzed using Nvivo 12 software.

Theme 1: Encouragement. Results of participant responses from interviews revealed internal factors consistent with family and mother as codes, that surfaced from 3 of 12 (25%) participants which resulted in a category of family, with encouragement emerging as Theme 1. Two of 12 (13%) participants indicated the fact that their mother attended and recommended the school they were currently enrolled. Specifically, Participant 3 emphasized how friends provided the needed encouragement, through "thick and thin," while guiding him when undecided of what avenue to take with life after incarceration." Moreover, the participants asserted how family and friends influenced their decisions, along with providing the encouragement needed to pursue their educational goals.

Theme 2: Self-enrichment. The responses from participant's interviews uncovered internal influences that were constant with the following codes: advance education and career aspirations, which surfaced from 7 of 12 (58%) participants resulting in advancement of education to develop as a category, with self-enrichment emerging as Theme 2. Three of 12 (25%) participants indicated the desire to advance their education with a higher degree, such as a

Master's in Business Administration (MBA), to earn an education to have better opportunities, not only for themselves, but for others.

Specifically, four participants (33%), discussed the desire to pursue a career, in professions, such as nursing, physical therapy, dentistry, and engineering. In addition, Participant 11 recognized it would be less costly to complete the prerequisites at the community college and then transfer over to a university to take main courses for his desired career. Moreover, the study members stressed that community college provided the opportunity to enrich their lives after incarceration through the advancement of education along with ambitions to seek a new career.

Interview Question 1B.

Interview Question 1B asked, *To what extent did your contact with the criminal justice system have an influence on your decision to seek postsecondary education?* The transcribed responses below begin with Participant 1 and end consecutively with Participant 12.

- None really. You know, I've only had a couple encounters with police; it was just like tickets. (Participant 1)
- Just, overall enrichment, because I'm not doing anything, and I want to stay active. (Participant 2)
- Yes, because I think that you should always want to do better for yourself and that's why I enrolled in college, because I'm actually going to school for criminal justice. (Participant 3)
- Honestly, like, all the little incidents in my encounters I had with the police, every time I'm around the police I get nervous. I hope they don't shoot; every day I read up on social media, and I just watch how the police is just killing innocent people, like, until like recently, I seen this little post that, like, this homeless man wasn't even doing nothing and the police just arrest him for no reason, and I'm just like, WOW. Honestly it did, because, you know, I don't need the police to look at us African men like thugs and everything. The only reason I'm here because I want to show police that some of us is not bad, we're really good, you know, we're good hearted people you know. African men are misunderstood, you know, the police think of us African men as not as an equal, but there's different functions between all of us, you know. (Participant 4)

- Well, from I can say, I know that jail, influenced me to get a better education so I can, someday, I get to where, you know, where I want to be, so I can help those that get out. I want to be an architect. (Participant 5)
- Being subjected as a black male, periodically, just having an education, knowing that in today's age that color's still kind of like a factor and how they discriminate against people. (Participant 6)
- It influenced me basically to enrich African American people more. If more African Americans went to college, and we got more stability, it would probably lessen the fact that African Americans are violent, if they're not doing something productive. They won't have free time to commit those things. (Participant 7)
- Going to school, I feel like there's no roadblock right now that will stop me, if I continue on my journey right now. (Participant 8)
- I feel like the police, also the law, think they more intelligent than some of us, so I feel if I stay in school, I have to learn more, and it could probably help me or protect myself in the future. (Participant 9)
- I actually earned my G.E.D. in prison. I decided to go further, because I wanted to make a change and a difference in my life; I didn't want to be the same person that I used to be. (Participant 10)
- To improve my mindset, so I'll go to school, get my education, I can get away from certain situations. (Participant 11)
- Yes, college had an influence on me. (Participant 12)

Precisely, after reviewing each transcribed interview, the researcher developed a list of topics, clustered similar topics, grouped and classified each into codes using descriptive wording to organize the data for preliminary analysis. Furthermore, the researcher approached the analysis of data with directness to each theme that emerged and accepted the phenomenon. Each interview was transcribed and thoroughly reviewed to grasp a complete understanding of the responses prior to coding. The 12 responses from participants were organized by *Interview Question 1B* from which codes were developed. Codes were formed, and themes acknowledged after the categories were examined from participants' responses as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5: Theme Analysis: Interview Question 1B

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Life Improvement	• Enrichment	Self-enrichment
Race	• Stereotypes	Social Perception

The participants' responses related to Interview Question 1B revealed the following themes: (2a) self-enrichment and (3) social perception, which were investigated individually to provide simplicity. All responses were coded and analyzed using Nvivo 12 software.

Theme 2a: Self-enrichment. The replies to the interviews resulted in a life improvement code that surfaced in six of twelve (50%) responses, which lead to a category that included: enrichment with self-enrichment emerging as Theme 2a. Participant 4 precisely indicated that self-enrichment was a factor that helped in their pursuit of success in achieving an education, which provides the opportunity to show police that African men are misunderstood. Furthermore, six participants wanted to make a change and a difference in their lives, with a desire to change from the person they were while incarcerated. Overwhelmingly, all six participants indicated the desire to enrich their lives after incarceration was essential to the successful pursuit of an education.

Theme 3: Social Perceptions. The responses to the interview questionnaire resulted in race as a code that appeared 4 of the 12 (33%) responses from participants, which resulted into the category of stereotypes, with social perception emerging as Theme 4. Moreover, the four study members indicated the desire to enhance the perception of Blacks, because if more African Americans went to college, they become stable, which may lessen the stereotype that African Americans are violent. Precisely, Participant 6 emphasized that just having an education in today's society is important because a person's color is still a factor, which may lead to

stereotypes and possibly resulting in an undesirable perception. Participant 9 also claimed that he had to learn more, because societal perception was essential in helping or hindering him in the pursuit of successfully achieving and education after incarceration.

Interview Question 1C

Interview Question 1C asked, *What do you hope to gain from the education you are receiving at the community college?* The following transcribed responses begin with Participant 1 and end consecutively with Participant 12.

- Electrical, because I like working with my hand — like, hands-on. I'll be either an electrical engineer or computer engineer. (Participant 1)
- Because I will be better educated just knowing how to do things, and to just, say something as simple as knowing how to write a sentence or to know how to conduct myself through college. College also has programs that you can get in and can further help you. (Participant 2)
- I want to go into criminal justice and hopefully become a lawyer and then, become a lawyer, become a judge. (Participant 3)
- I'm really hoping to gain here new skills to take me into a university. Prepare me for what's out there. It's preparing me for what's to come. (Participant 4)
- My degree, so I can transfer over to, because I heard if I go here for two years I can transfer over to a university. (Participant 5)
- Well, it's going to be able to help me pursue my career, of course, which is, being an MBA, going into Business Administration, and trying to further my business. (Participant 6)
- A good mindset of a career I want to go into. Not just something to do, but actually a good career that makes me a nice amount of money that I can provide for myself and later on a family. I want to become a licensed practical nurse. (Participant 7)
- I want to be a better person and make a contribution to my community. I hope to gain more knowledge, learn stuff that I haven't learned. I feel like there's a lotta stuff to be learned, and I don't know everything I should, so I feel like staying in school and trying to stay on the right track, and I can get to where I need to be in life. (Participant 8)

- I hope to gain more knowledge. I want to learn the smaller things that higher up universities don't really touch on, like the in-detail things. Like right now we're learning, reading books on civil rights, slavery, and all that. (Participant 9)
- I enrolled in college so I can take initiative, be a better person; most of all, I hope to gain better friends. Not only better friends, but to obtain the steppingstones for my short-term goal. (Participant 10)
- A basic understanding of what I'm going get into when I get into my major, which will be, all my prerequisites and gaining an understanding of my classes so that I could perform and possibly meet a couple people. (Participant 11)
- It can help me to have a better life, step towards high degrees and move forward. (Participant 12)

After reviewing each transcribed interview, the researcher established a list of topics, clustered like topics, assembled and classified each into codes using descriptive wording to organize the data for preliminary analysis. Furthermore, the researcher approached the analysis of data with directness to each theme that emerged and accepted the phenomenon.

Moreover, each interview was transcribed and thoroughly reviewed to grasp a complete understanding of the responses prior to coding. The 12 responses from participants were organized by *Interview Question 1C* from which codes were developed. Codes were formed, and themes acknowledged after the categories were examined from participants' responses as indicated in Table 6.

Table 6: Theme Analysis: Interview Question 1C

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Degree Attainment	• Educational Goals	Career Aspirations
Pursuit of Career	• Career Goals	
Enhanced Knowledge	• Accomplish Goals • Knowledge	Self-enrichment

The participants' replies related to Interview Question 1C revealed the following themes: (4) career aspirations and (2b) self-enrichment, which were investigated individually to provide simplicity. All responses were coded and analyzed using Nvivo 12 software.

Theme: 4: Career Aspirations. The responses to the interview resulted in degree attainment and pursuit of a career as codes that appeared 8 of 12 (67%) responses from participants, resulting in categories of educational goals and career goals, with career aspirations emerging as Theme 4. Participant 4 emphasized that he was hoping to gain new skills that would take him to a university where he could attain a higher degree, in essence, preparing him for what is to come for life after incarceration. Three study members expressed the desire to move into a career as an engineer, attorney or judge, and nursing, positioning them to make a nice amount of money to provide for themselves and later a family. Overwhelmingly, all participants indicated a desire to have a better life. Attaining a degree from college could position them for desirable careers and allow them to move forward with life after incarceration. As a result, attaining a degree and being positioned to pursue a career were valuable elements to be gained from the education received at the community college.

Theme: 2b: Self-enrichment. The replies to the interviews resulted in a code of enhanced knowledge that surfaced in 4 of 12 (33%) responses that lead to accomplishing goals and knowledge categories with self-enrichment emerging as Theme 2b. Participants 8 and 10 added that attending community college allowed them to understand the importance of staying in school and that staying on the right track would position them to get where they needed to be in life, as well as obtaining the steppingstones to accomplish short-term goals. Furthermore, the study members stated that being better educated and simply having the knowledge of how to do things, such as knowing how to write a sentence or conduct themselves while in college, was an

essential attribute resulting from the knowledge and education received from the community college. Precisely, all participants understood that the aspect of self-enrichment through accomplishing goals and enhanced knowledge were essential attributes to gain from the education received from the community college.

Interview Question 1D

Interview Question 1D asked, *How do you think completing your education could help you avoid further contact with the criminal justice system?* The following transcribed responses begin with Participant 1 and end consecutively with Participant 12.

- If I get an education, I have money and a job, and if you don't have money, people see you as a problem in the world, so completing my education would eliminate that. (Participant 1)
- College professors told me or taught me that college just gives you the knowledge to know how to go and get what you want to get. The farther you go along in college, the more you know how to go about going to get what it is you want. (Participant 2)
- It will make me wiser and not to do the same things that I'd done when I was younger, like smoke marijuana and just abide by the laws and don't get into trouble. (Participant 3)
- Honestly, it's a lot about, you know, I'm a very, humble person that, you know, I don't like to get into mess, you know. I'm really a humble person that helps people any chance I get, I help them, you know, a lot of people misunderstood; they look at me like I'm a hood cats, hood dudes, you know. (Participant 4)
- Because you know, I feel like cops bother you more if they think you're more from the streets and you're not educated. If you showed them that you're educated and you know about what you're supposed to know, they're not going bother you as much as they would if you didn't know much. If I was walking up the street just on a normal, with some, regular clothes on, like jeans, a T-shirt, and then I was talking to him in like a regular, just a regular way, he'll bother me more than if I was riding in a car with a suit jacket or a tie on, and I was talking to him in a more professional way, he'll probably let me go more about my business, and he won't question me as much. (Participant 5)

- I don't, because it does not matter how educated or how rich you are, you can still be subjected by police, no matter how much money you make or what career you have you still have a chance of getting in contact with the police. (Participant 6)
- I feel like the criminal justice system only bother or see a threat to things that are not productive. And if they are productive, how are you doing these things, if you feel like you're productive, so like if you like doing a rally for peace, but if you're making a lotta noise and making riots and things like that's productive, but it's not really the best interest of police, to not just come, because it's like, I guess that's the real definition of, like, positive in what they would be doing. (Participant 7)
- I will do positive things and be seen in a more positive way. (Participant 8)
- Having an education will kind of lessen the stereotype of, like, being thuggish, being African American, the stereotype of being thuggish would be less if they see that I have an education. That African Americans are thugs; they don't have an education. (Participant 9)
- I think completing my education would definitely help me avoid police contact because, you know, the more time you have, habits are acquired through time and the people we socialize with, so the more time I spend being constructive, the less time I have to be negative. (Participant 10)
- I'm not really sure actually, because I'm a black man, so that means I'm at a high risk to be pulled over for pretty much nothing. I've been pulled over three or four times and wasn't doing anything wrong. (Participant 11)
- Education can help me. You know, to be educated, to know more about what is going on, and to avoid anything that can stop me. Getting involved with the law. (Participant 12)

Upon reviewing each transcribed interview, the researcher formed a list of topics, clustered like topics, assembled and classified each into codes using descriptive wording to organize the data for preliminary analysis. Furthermore, the researcher approached the analysis of data with straightforwardness to each theme that emerged and accepted the phenomenon.

Each interview was transcribed and thoroughly reviewed to grasp a complete understanding of the responses prior to coding. The 12 responses from participants were organized by *Interview Question ID* from which codes were developed. Codes were formed, and

themes acknowledged after the categories were examined from participants' responses as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Theme Analysis: Interview Question 1D

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Stereotyping	• Lessen Stereotyping	Social Perception
Being Productive		
Knowledge	• Enhanced Knowledge	Improved Decision-Making

The participants' replies related to Interview Question 1D revealed the following themes: (3a) social perception and (5) improved decision-making, which were probed individually to provide simplicity. All responses were coded and analyzed using Nvivo 12 software.

Theme 3a: Social Perception. The participant responses to the interviews resulted in stereotyping and being productive as codes that surfaced in 5 of 12 (42%) responses, which lead to lessening stereotypes as a category with social perception developing as Theme 3a. In particular, Participants 1, 5, 8, and 9 indicated that completing their education could be instrumental in helping them avoid further contact with the criminal justice system because, if they attained an education, they would have a job and money, and cops bother them more if they think they are from the streets and not educated. The study participants asserted they would be able to do positive things and be seen in a more positive way, which could lessen the stereotype of being thuggish if they see they were educated. Participants 10 and 12 maintained that education could help them be more constructive, lessening time to be negative. Additionally, the study members contended that being educated allowed them to know more about what was going on socially and avoid anything that could stop them from being productive. Overall, study

members believed that completing their education could help avoid police contact because negative habits are acquired through idle time and the people with whom they socialize. As a result, study participants responses indicated that completing their education could help them avoid further contact with the criminal justice system resulting from a lessening of stereotypes, which often influences social perception.

Theme 5: Improved Decision-Making. Study participants' responses to interviews resulted in knowledge as codes that surfaced in 4 of 12 (33%) responses, which lead to enhanced knowledge as a category with improved decision-making emerging as Theme 5. All four study members pointed to the importance of knowledge attained in college that allows them to be wiser, enhances their knowledge, be constructive, and avoids roadblocks through better decision making. Specifically, Participant 2 stated the knowledge gained from college professors has been instrumental. In addition, Participant 2 indicated college professors emphasized that college just provides the knowledge to go and get what an individual wanted. Overall, study participants stressed the further you go in college, the more people know how to make good decisions about getting what they want.

Sub-question 2

The findings for Sub-question 2, *What external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?* were generated from the responses of 12 study participants to Interview Question 2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D on the interview questionnaire. The responses were transcribed to Interview Question 2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D from which each theme was developed:

Interview Question 2A.

Interview Question 2A asked, *What resources have you used to help you be successful in your classes? Please explain how the resources were helpful or supportive in helping you persist in your program.* The following transcribed responses begin with Participant 1 and end consecutively with Participant 12.

- I've used books, I purchased books on Cengage, and use it for English. I used the printer once; I've seen a counselor, for transfer questions. (Participant 1)
- Well, I'm really just getting started. I haven't been in college long, but I have, through a friend used the career center to get help writing my resumé. (Participant 2)
- The library and talk to the teachers when I need help. I go there to use the computers if I need to type a paper or just any type of work that I need to do when I'm not at school. Sometimes if I want to check out a book, other than that, that's about it, the computer or get a book. (Participant 3)
- It's a lot of motivation, you know. (Participant 4)
- Yeah, I use Google, Smart Thinking, Online tutor that the school offer. They give me feedback on what I need to work on or what I need to add, or what I need to remove. I also use the library to print my papers. (Participant 5)
- I'd say sports, work-study programs. I'm currently trying to play football. Work-study programs. Well, sports have always been a part of me and helped me keep focused on what I have to do, and keep things in order for me; really, it's kept me out of trouble a lot. (Participant 6)
- Patience, dedication, and my mother has bought me a computer. She supplies me with many things, such as school supplies, books that she has, that I actually need, so it saves money and actually time. My car, good transportation to have a steady way of transportation to school. (Participant 7)
- My mother supplies me with many things, such as school supplies, books that she has, but I actually need, so it saves money and actually time. (Participant 8)
- The resources I've used so far, like, peers, family members, professors, the internet, books, which kept me motivated to want to learn more. The resources, like books, I finished reading *12 Years a Slave* and the stuff I learned throughout the book, kept me interested in wanting to learn more, so therefore further researching, which gives me other knowledge that I didn't know. So, I like sharing knowledge with others. Some of my family members are very successful, they're always telling me, this is what happens when you stay in school. (Participant 9)

- I use the library for books and printing. (Participant 10)
- Yeah, I have a lot of motivation from my father. Ever since, like, I was playing football, he always motivated me; he was in my corner a lot,, he stay on top of me. He’s always asking, did you go to school today? How was class? He says you need to stay on top of your stuff, he reassures me. My old high school coach, and college football coach checks on me to make sure I’m doing good. Ask me what’s going on and stuff like that. He wants me to come back to Concordia University. (Participant 11)
- I use the library; I have a computer at home. I use the labs when I come to school. (Participant 12)

Upon reviewing each transcribed interview, the researcher created a list and clustered like topics, assembled and classified each into codes using descriptive wording to organize the data for preliminary analysis. Furthermore, the researcher approached the analysis of data with straightforwardness to each theme that developed and acknowledged the phenomenon. Each interview was transcribed and thoroughly reviewed to grasp a complete understanding of the responses prior to coding. The 12 responses from participants were organized by *Interview Question 2A* from which codes were developed. Codes were formed, and themes acknowledged after the categories were examined from participants’ responses as indicated in Table 8.

Table 8: Theme Analysis: Interview Question 2A

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Library	• Library Services	School Resources
Books Work-study Programs	• School Resources	
Mothers Fathers	• Family	Family Support

The participants' replies related to Interview Question 2A revealed the following themes: (6) school resources and (7) family support, which were probed individually to provide simplicity. All responses were coded and analyzed using Nvivo 12 software.

Theme 6: School Resources. The study participants responses to the interviews resulted in library, books, and work-study programs as codes that emerged in 8 of 12 (67%) responses, leading to library services and school resources considered as categories with school resources evolving as Theme 6. The use of the library, books, and work-study programs were essential resources for African American men who had contact with the criminal justice system that helped in their pursuit of success in their educational programs. Explicitly, all eight participants emphasized that the library, books, career center, school computers and internet, online tutor, work-study programs, and professors were integral to their success in college. Study participants emphasized the importance of library services in having access to books needed, printing papers, computer and internet usage, as many did not have the support at home. School resources are significant assets that support participants, keeping them interested in wanting to learn, and resulting in additional knowledge that assists in helping them achieve success in their classes.

Theme 7: Family Support. The participants' replies to the interviews resulted in mothers and fathers as codes that surfaced in 4 of the 12 (33%) responses, which lead to family as a category with family support emerging as Theme 7. Three of 12 (25%) of participant responses pointed out how instrumental their mothers and fathers were in helping them in being successful in their educational programs. Two participants shared how their mothers supported their educational goals by purchasing the needed supplies, such as books a car for transportation to get to school, which is instrumental in their education. One participant stressed how his father

always motivated him and was in his corner. All study members indicated the importance of family support in helping them achieve success in their classes.

Interview Question 2B.

Interview Question 2B asked, *Are there any roadblocks that could hinder or stop you from completing your educational goals?* The following transcribed responses begin with

Participant 1 and end sequentially with Participant 12.

- No, this college is good, I like it. Yeah, I'm going to finish. (Participant 1)
- No, the resources in the school is what I need (Participant 2)
- One possibly could, when my grandma was is sick right now, and I've been missing a lot of class due to helping her. Just hoping that she can get better and I don't have to keep continuing to miss class. (Participant 3)
- My mother and I don't have a bond like we had. My mother was like my friend, but we do not communicate. (Participant 4)
- Besides work, no. Only time, but work is where I do most of my homework because the firehouse is like our other house, if we're not getting' calls, I use that time to do homework. (Participant 5)
- Nothing really; the only thing that can stop me is myself really. I have to keep maintaining my focus and keep pushing. If I let distractions hinder my focus, I mean, it's basically on me, so, if I stay focused, really nothing can bother or mess with my education. (Participant 6)
- No, I don't see anything that is out of my control that will stop me. I feel like there's no roadblock right now that will stop me if I continue on my journey right now. (Participant 7)
- I think the only thing that would stop me is if everything fails, like if I don't have a car, I don't have any resources. I don't have money to get to places to get and back and forth. (Participant 8)
- The environment that we're in — drugs, fighting, gang violence. If I do get involved into gang violence, for example, then I would start hanging' with a gang, stop going to school, because of the environment I'm in, it's all gangs, drugs, fighting. (Participant 9)

- The only roadblock I feel can hinder me is myself. We make and we break our own limitations as human beings. It's mind over matter, so, if I'm standing' in my way, how can I make or break my limitations? I can't; I don't plan to stand in my way. (Participant 10)
- Nothing, Not even a little bit. If I set my mind to it, I can do it. (Participant 11)
- Yeah, having bills that I cannot handle can stop me; Failing classes; That's the only two things. (Participant 12)

Upon assessing each transcribed interview, the researcher created a list and clustered like topics, in addition to assembling and classifying each into codes using descriptive wording to organize the data for preliminary analysis. Furthermore, the researcher approached the analysis of data with openness to each theme that developed and acknowledged the phenomenon. Moreover, each interview was transcribed and thoroughly reviewed to grasp a complete understanding of the responses prior to coding. The 12 responses from participants were organized by *Interview Question 2B* from which codes were developed. Codes were formed, and themes acknowledged after the categories were examined from participants' responses as indicated in Table 9.

Table 9: Theme Analysis: Interview Question 2B

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Mother Grandmother	• Family	Family Matters
Resources	• Transportation • Expenses	Lack of Resources

The participants' replies related to Interview Question 2B revealed the following themes: (8) family matters and (9) lack of resources, which were explored individually to provide simplicity. All responses were coded and analyzed using Nvivo 12 software.

Theme 8: Family Matters. The participants responses to the interviews resulted in mother and grandmother as codes that appeared in 2 of 12 (17%) responses, which lead to family as a category with family matters surfacing as Theme 8. Participant 3 acknowledged that one roadblock that could hinder or stop him from completing his educational goals was the health of his grandmother. The participant specified that his grandmother was currently ill, which has resulted in him missing a lot of class because of the need to help her. He further indicated that he hopes she recovers soon, then he would not have to continue to miss class. Participant 4 emphasized that losing the bond he had with his mother would be a roadblock that could hinder his ability to complete educational goals. Moreover, the study participant stressed that his mother was like a friend, which is in jeopardy because they are currently not communicating. Consequently, the participants signified the significance that family matters would have on their ability to complete educational goals.

Theme 9: Lack of Resources. The study members responses to the interviews resulted in resources as a code that appeared in two of twelve (17%) responses, which lead to transportation and expenses as categories with lack of resources emerging as Theme 9. Participants 8 and 12 maintained that the lack of resources was a crucial factor that would interrupt their ability to complete educational goals. Specifically, Participant 8 contended the only thing that would stop him is if he did not have personal transportation to and from school, because of not having resources to get back and forth. Participant 9 suggested that having bills without the resources to pay them would be detrimental and could stop him from continuing his educational goals.

Moreover, the participants alluded that the lack of resources would have a substantial impact on their ability to achieve educational goals.

Interview Question 2C.

Interview Question 2C asked, *Have there been any people who have been supportive of you while in College? Are there any people who have stood in the way of completing your educational goals?* The following transcribed responses begin with Participant 1 and end sequentially with Participant 12.

- My family, my mom, my dad, they support me, like, emotionally, physically. They provide for me, financially, if I need money. I have friends that support me as well. (Participant 1)
- My family supports me. (Participant 2)
- My mom, my dad, brothers, all my family, supported me when I came back to school. When my car wasn't operating, my mom let me use her car. Anything that I need with school, she's willing to help. (Participant 3)
- I go through so much and suffer from depression; the individual (female) I told you about, a little family situation can stand in the way of me finishing school. (Participant 4)
- Everybody I come across, well, that know I'm in school; my coworkers, my family, and friends support me going to school. (Participant 5)
- Oh yeah, my whole family, actually. Give me rides to school every day, motivating me to do better. Even if I fail, they won't let me quit. (Participant 6)
- My mom and my sister, who is actually enrolled here too. My sister and my friends, they help me out with a couple of my homework, give me money for things. (Participant 7)
- I've had classmates last semester that helped me. (Participant 8)
- My family members, friends, classmates, professors. (Participant 9)
- These people are my mother, my grandmother, my brother, my sister, my aunts, my uncles, and my cousins. They're very supportive of me and everything that I do, you know, they're — they're proud of me for takin' the effort, initiative, and the time out

to actually really not just tell them that I want to do better but trying to show them. (Participant 10)

- Friends have supported me while I'm in college. She's a financial aid, she walked me through, how to do certain things, and she explained certain stuff to me that I didn't know. My mother as well. (Participant 11)
- My dad is supportive of me because uh, I'm living in his house, and I'm not paying any bills; he pays for everything. (Participant 12)

Upon evaluating each transcribed interview, the researcher formed a list of topics, clustered like topics, as well as assembled and classified each into codes using descriptive wording to organize the data for preliminary analysis. Furthermore, the researcher approached the analysis of data with directness to each theme that developed and recognized the phenomenon.

Moreover, each interview was transcribed and thoroughly reviewed to grasp a complete understanding of the responses prior to coding. The 12 responses from participants were organized by *Interview Question 2C* from which codes were developed. Codes were formed, and themes accepted after the categories were examined from participants' responses as indicated in Table 10.

Table 10: Theme Analysis: Interview Question 2C

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Mother, Father, Sisters, & Brothers	• Family	Family & Friends
Co-workers & Friends	• Friends	

The participants' replies related to Interview Question 2C revealed the following theme: (10) family and friends dynamics, which was combined to provide simplicity. All responses were coded and analyzed using Nvivo 12 software.

Theme 10: Family and Friends. The participants' replies to the interviews resulted in mother, father, sisters, and brothers, along with co-workers and friends as codes that appeared in 11 of 12 (92%) responses, which lead to family and friends as categories with family and friends emerging as Theme 10. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12 precisely mentioned that the support provided by their mother, father, sister, and brother, along with other family members, was influential in the support of their educational goals. In addition, the study participants stated that family supported them emotionally and financially, relieving them of some of the worries associated with attending college. Participants 5, 8, 9, and 11 alluded to the fact that co-workers and friend played an influential role in supporting them while in college. Moreover, the study members mentioned they had friends who assisted them in how to do certain things, and explained information needed to be successful in college. Furthermore, the participants recognized the impact of co-worker's support since they have been attending school. Overwhelmingly, all eleven study members highlighted that family and friends were instrumental in supporting them while in college.

Interview Question 2D.

Interview Question 2D asked, *What suggestions do you have for the college to help African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system a more positive experience?* The following transcribed responses begin with Participant 1 and end sequentially with Participant 12.

- They should discuss issues; like, with the law. Well, not every class, you know. (Participant 1)
- Develop anger management courses. Because most people that has had dealings with the criminal justice system have anger, that bitterness, they have the resources. (Participant 2)
- Some people don't like school and want to be in the streets, and I'm not really sure what the college can do. (Participant 3)
- I really need to stop with the drinking, smoking, you know. Honestly, more communication, you know. I feel like, the professors, like, they just tell us, you know, I prefer for them, like, write it on the board, you know. (Participant 4)
- If they knew a student was in jail, don't isolate them from the students because they have a criminal record. Like, a lot of times, somebody with a criminal record, they might try to put them in a different group or different area or put all of them together aside from the students, just don't isolate them from the students, just treat them like a normal person. (Participant 5)
- Create a more positive experience; more opportunities, sports or work opportunities; chess club, or robotics. (Participant 6)
- Actually, offer more, law enforcement programs because I don't really hear about that many programs in this college. (Participant 7)
- I feel like there should be like a transportation system. Because police and African-American males has been a big problem these last couple years, so if we get more males to come, because some males don't have transportation or ways, so they just blow it off, so I feel like do we really want something to change, we should make the first step. (Participant 8)
- Treat them like a regular student, don't see that they've been in jail and, like, do not treat them different from everybody else. (Participant 9)
- Have commercials, more so than surveys; a commercial, for example, could help with branding for individuals with criminal experiences. (Participant 10)
- I would say letting students with criminal backgrounds know that they are no different than the other people there. (Participant 11)
- Like helping me take more English classes. Because I'm from Africa, so I learned English here. I would suggest, like, to have more English classes. Improve my English. (Participant 12)

Upon evaluating each transcribed interview, the researcher formed a list of topics, clustered similar topics, and gathered and classified each into codes using descriptive wording to organize the data for preliminary analysis. Furthermore, the researcher approached the analysis of data with directness to each theme that developed and recognized the phenomenon. Moreover, each interview was transcribed and thoroughly reviewed to grasp a complete understanding of the responses prior to coding. The 12 responses from participants were organized by *Interview Question 2D* from which codes were developed. Codes were formed, and themes accepted after the categories were examined from participants' responses as indicated in Table 11.

Table 11: Theme Analysis: Interview Question 2D

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Prevent Isolation	• Seclusion	Overt Seclusion

The participants' replies related to Interview Question 2D revealed the following theme: (10) seclusion, which was explored to provide simplicity. All responses were coded and analyzed using Nvivo 12 software.

Theme 11: Seclusion. The responses to interviews resulted in preventing isolation as a code that appeared in three of twelve (25%) responses, which lead to seclusion as a category with seclusion evolving as Theme 11. The participants suggested that colleges could help African American men attending school with a background in the criminal justice system, create a more positive experience, by preventing isolation from other students, which would counteract seclusion. Specifically, Participant 9 suggested that schools treat African American men attending school with a background in the criminal justice system like a regular student, and do

not look at the fact they have been in jail and do not treat them different from other students.

Moreover, Participant 11 accentuated letting students with criminal backgrounds know that they are no different than the other people, which should help African American male students that have contact with the criminal justice system have a more positive experience in school.

Theoretical Connection

The theoretical association formed from the result of this study provided insights on the basis of the Bandura self-efficacy theory which Maier and Curtin (2005) purported, “that a belief in one’s personal capabilities is central to how a person responds to tasks” (p. 354). In addition, Bandura’s (1993, 1999; 2006) research demonstrated that self-efficacy was an important aspect of human development in the cognitive and functioning aspects of individuals. Research indicated views about self-efficacy impact how people think, feel, and inspire themselves and act (Perceived Self-Efficacy, Self-Regulation, 2016). Additionally, Cervone (2000) reported, a significant awareness in social cognitive theory, “self-efficacy was originally used in overcoming phobic behavior” (p. 8). Baldwin, Baldwin, and Ewald (2006) reported, “it implies a sense of personal control, the exercise of which is not considered a drive (which pushes action), but rather an incentive (which pulls action)” (p. 8).

Moreover, studies reported individuals whom exude confidence in their capabilities, and develop a course of action required for a desired outcome which is consistent with the description of self-enrichment, social perception, career aspirations, and improved decision-making supporting the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). Further, this study found participants communicate on deciding to obtain a degree and further their education to master’s level can help them be more constructive, lessening time to be negative; change behavior to do positive things and be viewed in a positive way and lessen the stereotype of being labeled

thuggish; members believed that completing their degrees will lessen the interaction with the police; participants claimed, completing their education could help them avoid further contact with the criminal justice system, and others suggested, careers in industries such as nursing physical therapy, dental, and engineering is at the forefront of their course of action which align with self-enrichment. In addition, some participants claimed obtaining a degree could enhance the perceptions of the African American race which align with social perception. Thus, some subjects desire to move into a career as an engineer, attorney, or judge to position themselves in making more money for themselves and later a family and overwhelming all participants desired to have a better life and obtaining a degree would position them for life after incarceration. Subsequently, participants stressed the further you go in college the more you know how to make good decision about getting what you want which align with improved decision-making.

Summary

Chapter Four reported the findings of this study, which focused on what internal and external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs. This phenomenological approach utilized tape-recorded scripted interviews as the means of data collection. The participants shared opened and honest experiences that presented their perspectives of what internal and external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs, which were tape-recorded, responses were transcribed, and data analyzed. Furthermore, the data were coded, classified, themes identified, and results summarized in narrative form. The study's findings and data analysis yielded a total of 11 themes. The following themes emerging for Research Question 1 included: encouragement, self-

enrichment, social perception, and career aspiration which were prevalent during in-depth interviews. The themes that surfaced for Research Question 2 consisted of school resources, family support, family matters, lack of resources, family and friends, and overt seclusion. The findings reflected an apparent connection to the literature reviews and theoretical framework.

Chapter Five serves as the concluding chapter, which consists of a discussion and interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, implications of the study, and conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

This qualitative, phenomenological research study examined the internal and external factors that may influence persistence through graduation or transfer of African American men who have been involved with the criminal justice system. This phenomenological study utilized the recorded interviews of 12 African American men actively enrolled full or part-time in a community college. In addition, the purpose of this study was to determine what internal and external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in the pursuit of success in their educational programs.

The phenomenological approach was appropriate because the study involved exploring a phenomenon to understand internal and external factors that may help or hinder African American men in educational programs that have or had contact with the criminal justice system. The nature of this study was constructed utilizing a qualitative design in order to understand human behavior based on experiences resulting from internal or external influences through employing a purposeful sampling method to collect data. Specifically, the use of a phenomenological study provided a deeper association of the internal and external factors through an emergence of themes from the lived experiences of participants.

The results of the study revealed that internal and external factors were deeply connected helping or hindering African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system in the pursuit of successful educational programs. Furthermore, the results recognized that participants felt that obtaining a degree can help them be more constructive, lessening time

to be negative; change behavior to do positive things and be viewed in a positive way, which is consistent with Bandura self-efficacy theory. Moreover, the results of this study were derived from the findings of Research Question 1, which resulted in the following themes: (a) encouragement; (b) self-enrichment; (c) social perception; (d) career aspirations; (e) improved decision-making; (f) school resources; (g) family support; (h) family matters; (i) lack of resources; (j) family and friends; and (k) overt seclusion. Moreover, the findings reflect a distinct relationship to the literature reviews and theoretical framework.

Interpretation of Findings

There were several interpretations recognized and documented from the findings of this phenomenological study. These interpretations presented clarity to the data collected and analyzed. The research consisted of one overarching question: What internal and external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs? Moreover, the research consisted of two sub-questions:

1. What internal factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?
2. What external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs? The interpretations of findings are presented with each sub-question.

Sub-Question 1

What internal factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?

The findings for Sub-Question 1 revealed experiences consistent with family and mother(s) which supported the theme associated with encouragement. Specifically, family and friends influenced the participants' decisions to attend school in addition to providing the encouragement required to pursue their educational goals. Precisely, the desire to advance education and career aspirations, the opportunity to enrich their lives after incarceration in addition to attending college allowed them to understand the importance of staying on the right track that may position them to get ahead in life. This supported the self-enrichment theme. Moreover, social perception, a theme that was linked to race, revealed that many subjects felt a person's color was that led to stereotypes and conceivably resulted in an undesirable perception. Coincidentally, Harris and Wood (2013) indicated that social integration does not have a positive effect on the success of men of color, while researchers found social integration has a negative influence on African American men's persistence (Strayhorn, 2012; Tinto, 1993).

In addition, completing their education was considered as being productive and may result in avoiding further contact with the criminal justice system resulting in a lessening of stereotypes influencing social perception. In comparison, Alexander (2010) suggested that without an education, African American men who had contact with the criminal justice system may recidivate, fail to become gainfully employed, or lack the resources needed to be a productive member of society. Degree attainment and an active pursuit of a career were linked to the theme of career aspirations. It was considered a valued essential gained from the pursuit of education at the community college. Related to the improved decision-making theme was the significance of knowledge. Moreover, participants indicated attending college enhances knowledge, allows them to be wiser, more constructive, and avoid roadblocks through improved decision making.

The findings of Sub-Question 1 include encouragement, self-enrichment, social perception, and career aspirations as themes that surfaced from the data collected. These results reveal an apparent relationship to the literature review and theoretical framework. This demonstrates consistency with the findings associated with previous research.

Sub-Question 2

What external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?

The findings for Sub-Question 2 indicated library, books, and work-study programs were significant resources for African American men who had had contact with the criminal justice system that supported them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs. These findings supported the theme associated with school resources. In addition, participants emphasized the importance of library services in having access to required books, printing, computer and internet usage, as many do not have the support at home. Wood et al. (2014) found there was differential influences across the racial/ethnic groups for self-efficacy and integration with faculty, academic advisors, use of the college library, and internet access. Moreover, Wood et al. (2014) suggested that college administrators and faculty should not use a monolithic approach, instead students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds should be considered separately, with programs introduced to improve self-efficacy and academic integration.

Family support was a theme that emerged because study members emphasized how influential the support of their mothers and fathers were in helping them in pursuit of success in their educational programs. In addition, participants stated their educational pursuits were

supported by family which included purchasing needed supplies such as books and providing a car for transportation to travel back and forth to school.

Family matters was a theme that surfaced from participant responses where it was acknowledged that one roadblock that could hinder or stop African American males who have had contact with the criminal justice system from completing educational goals was the health and welfare of their mother and grandmother. In addition, there was a concern of losing a mother-son bond, and that this alone would be a roadblock that may hinder the ability to complete educational goals. In comparison, Harris and Wood (2013) suggested that the environmental domain, which includes factors outside of the college that directly affect the engagement of men of color, such as working off campus, family commitments, crime, poverty, and financial need, resulted in African American men leaving college more than other men.

The lack of resources was a crucial factor in the success for African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system that could interrupt their ability to pursue complete educational goals. Study members contended the only things that would stop them were the lack of personal transportation to and from school and personal bills without the resources to pay them. Specifically, family and friends were overwhelmingly instrumental for participants emotionally and financially, which relieved them of the fears associated with attending college.

Study members discussed the impact of co-workers and friends support while they have been attending school. Likewise, Harris and Woods (2013) asserted that non-cognitive domains are associated with the theme of family and friends. Moreover, non-cognitive domains consist of emotional and affective responses of men of color to the social contexts and interactions that

occur in the college, which are affected by their self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and identity within the college (Harris & Woods, 2013).

Seclusion was a theme that surfaced as participants suggested that colleges could help African American men attending school with a background in the criminal justice system by creating a more positive experience and preventing isolation from other students. This would counteract seclusion. Being treated differently from other students was noted by participants in suggesting that schools should treat African American men with a background in the criminal justice system attending school like regular students and do not look at the fact they have been incarcerated.

Recommendations for Community Colleges

Based on the findings from the interviews with the African American men who had had previous contact with the criminal justice system, the following recommendations should be considered by administrators at community colleges.

- Provide regular counseling sessions to assess and to monitor students' progress to completion and to evaluate internal and external factors that may hinder progress of students.
- Provide access to resources that can mitigate external factors that may hinder progress toward completion.
- Provide a seamless pathway from college completion to job obtainment by developing a consortium of businesses that employ or are willing to employ individuals with felony backgrounds
- Provide support groups to help students transition into college and build and/or enhance self-esteem.
- Provide an orientation focused on the resources available at the college and give students appropriate opportunities to complete processes to have access to these resources (i.e. signing up for library cards).

- Provide family orientations to encourage family support. This will enhance the students' environmental domain.
- Provide exit interviews to monitor success of these students and college's completion rates.
- Have a specialized orientation to meet the needs and expectations of African American men who have had experiences with the legal system. The orientation serves as a bridge/transformation into the academic world.
- Create an early alert system to track student attendance and grades (mid-term grade reporting).
- Hold workshops and seminars to help students learn to be college students (note taking, test preparation, time management, etc.) and the college resources available to the students.
- Create support groups to help African American men to help them learn anger management, build positive interpersonal relationships, transition into mainstream society after contact with the criminal justice system.
- Develop and encourage membership in study groups for gateway courses (English, math, chemistry, etc). The study groups should be led by students who were successful in the courses.
- Create an in-house, wrap-around social service agency to help the men make the transition to college life and persist in completing their education.
- Develop a career counseling center to provide current and accurate information to help African American men make better choices in their future lives.

Limitations and Delimitations

This research study was conducted to address the identified gap in the literature regarding internal and external factors that affect African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system and their perceptions of factors that can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs. The study was conducted with a sample of 12 African American men actively enrolled full or part-time in a single community college. Based on the requirements for participant selection for this study, they were attending the same community

college, but attended classes at three separate campuses. None of the participants were currently on parole or probation at the time of the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the participants in this study were 12 African American men who had contact with the criminal justice system and actively enrolled full or part-time in a one community college, further research could address the limitations of this qualitative study by examining a larger sample size of African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system that are actively enrolled in different community colleges throughout the state(or nation). This study could provide a broader understanding of how internal and external factors may help or hinder African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system in their pursuit of a successful educational program.

Further research could be conducted with participants having completed one or more years of college. A research study of this sort may provide additional insight into the perceptions of African American men who had contact with the criminal justice system and actively enrolled full or part-time in a community college after one year. In addition, future studies could focus on a more diverse sample of participants than represented in this study. Research in this area could provide perspectives on educational programs and their effectiveness in reducing recidivism rates.

Furthermore, a similar study utilizing a qualitative case research methodology approach would allow an in-depth investigation of the internal and external factors that help or hinder African American men who had contact with the criminal justice system and who are actively enrolled full or part-time in an educational program. Perceptions regarding African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system is vital because of society's

stereotype of them as dangerous criminals which questions their abilities to achieve goals; a correlation of the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1993). This study could also provide an insight into the obstacles and barriers African American men face when attempting to complete educational programs after contact with the criminal justice system. In addition, a case study methodology could explore the individual aspects of African American men who successfully completed educational programs, after contact with the criminal justice system, to measure its impact in reducing their disproportionate involvement in the criminal justice system.

Implications

Several factors emerged from the study reflecting strong implications that trigger African American men who have been or currently involved with the criminal justice system and factors related to the educational programs. The study results revealed that internal and external factors significantly affected African American men pursuing higher education and participants were categorized as the following: (a) advancement of education; (b) enrichment; (c) accomplish goals; and (d) knowledge, which support the self-enrichment theme. Further, participants were categorized by both educational goal and career goal which aligns with the career aspiration theme. Participants reported advancing their education and being astute in their career goal supported a desire to augment their life after incarceration attending college offers constancy by allowing participants to remain stable.

Researchers established the role of self-efficacy in predicting student success and concluded that self-efficacy has a positive role in determining student success (Aguayo et al., 2011; Bong, 2011; Gore, 2006; Vuong, Brown-Welty & Tracz, 2010). Specifically, within academic settings, students with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to be successful in accomplishing their academic goals. Therefore, understanding the role of self-efficacy in helping

African American men who have had been incarcerated persist in achieving an education at a community college is vital.

More importantly, the findings recognized that self-enrichment and career aspirations were positively present represented by the participants determination, motivation and push toward a desired outcome; an implicit aspect of the Bandura self-efficacy theory. Bandura (1993) purported, peoples' motivation, personal feelings and attitudes, and behaviors are affected by their beliefs about their abilities to exercise control over their lives and the environment that affected their lives.

Bandura (1997; 2006) reported the significance of intentionality: people must share their goals and plans with others to accomplish their intentions through collective efforts. Participants stressed the importance of family are a major component of support. All study members indicated the importance of family support in helping them achieve success in their classes by purchasing the needed supplies such as books or a car for transportation to get to school. These were instrumental in supporting their educational success. Bandura (1997; 2006) claimed self-reflectiveness required probing one's thoughts to initiate an action plan to achieve their goal and having personal self-efficacy to adjust as needed. Reflecting this claim, participants stated that family supported them emotionally and financially, relieving them of worries associated with going to college. In addition, Bandura (1997; 2006) reported self-reactiveness involves people to initiate their action plans to achieve their goals. Thus, attending community college allowed participants to understand the importance of staying in school and on the right track, which would position them to get where they needed to be in life, as well as obtaining the steppingstones to accomplish short-term goals. Further, Bandura (1997; 2006) described forethought as people think about their futures and plan based on the goals they set, anticipating

the possible outcomes. In other words, their present and future behaviors are guided by achieving their visualized goals. Specifically, participants desire to make a change and a difference in their lives, with a desire to change from the person they were while incarcerated. Overwhelmingly, all participants indicated the desire to enrich their lives after incarceration was essential to the successful pursuit of an education.

Further implications from this research suggested degree attainment and pursuit of career play a crucial role in both education and career goals which develops into career aspiration. Participants revealed the desire to move into a career as an engineer, attorney or judge, and nursing, positioning them to increase their finances and provide for themselves and their family. Individuals' self-efficacy could influence career plans that influence choices of academic programs in which they enroll, in preparing for classes, and persisting even in the face of adversity.

Individuals create a unique set of capabilities, interests, and social systems during their lifetime. Researchers established that people's choices of careers, career options, and development had high positive levels of self-efficacy (Betz & Hackett; Lent & Hackett as cited in Bandura, 1993). Participants reported attaining a degree and being positioned to pursue a career were valuable elements to be gained from the education received at the community college. This aligns with Bandura (2006) who stated human agency is the ability of human beings to set goals, reflect, and evaluate courses of action and change behaviors/actions to achieve desired goals.

Conclusions

This study explored the live experiences of African American men who have been or currently involved with the criminal justice system and factors related to the educational

programs. The results of this study were essential in allowing the researcher to determine if commonalities ensued that explored the phenomenon to understand internal and external factors that may help or hinder African American men in educational programs that have or had contact with the criminal justice system, which yielded the following eleven themes: (a) encouragement; (b) self-enrichment; (c) social perception; (d) career aspirations; (e) improved decision-making; (f) school resources; (g) family support; (h) family matters; (i) lack of resources; (j) family and friends; and (k) seclusion.

Bandura's self-efficacy theory provided a foundation that supported the self-enrichment theme, with many participants reporting individual visions of their abilities to attain their educational and career goals. Participants suggested the following: (a) obtaining a degree permits them to be more productive; (b) reducing idle time that can increase negativity; and (c) altering behavior to pursue constructive activities in a positive way. Furthermore, results suggested that advanced education and career aspirations were synonymous with the self-efficacy theory.

Moreover, this qualitative analysis allowed the researcher to capture the unrehearsed viewpoints from the lived experiences of 12 African American men obtaining a higher education and have been involved in the criminal justice system. The study consisted of one research question and two sub questions developed to identify strategies that may increase the knowledge of internal and external factors that have an influence on persistence through graduation or transfer of 12 African American men who have been or currently are involved with the criminal justice system.

This research was important in confirming that findings reflect a distinct association to the theoretical framework and literature reviews. Further, the findings of this study were significant in narrowing a research gap by reporting factor influences with African American

men which may create a better understanding for academic research and police affiliations to help ease the tension between African American men and the police. Moreover, keeping African American men enrolled in higher education may create a positive effect on numerous areas of operations.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What internal factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?
 - a. Why are you enrolled at the community college?
 - b. To what extent did your contact with the criminal justice system have an influence on your decision to seek postsecondary education?
 - c. What do you hope to gain from the education you are receiving at the community college?
 - d. How do you think completing your education could help you avoid further contact with the criminal justice system?

2. What external factors do African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system perceive can help or hinder them in their pursuit of success in their educational programs?
 - a. What resources have you used to help you be successful in your classes? Please explain how the resources were helpful or supportive in helping you persist in your program.
 - b. Are there any roadblocks that could hinder or stop you from completing your educational goals?
 - c. Have there been any people who have been supportive of you while in college? Are there any people who have stood in the way of completing your educational goals?
 - d. What suggestions do you have for the college to help African American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system a more positive experience?

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Factors that Influence College Persistence by African American Men who have had Encounters with the Criminal Justice System

Principal Investigator: Ida Short

Email:

Phone:

Faculty Advisor: George Swan, EdD

Email:

Phone:

Study Principal Investigator: Sandra Balkema

Email:

STUDY PURPOSE

You are invited to participate in a research study about factors that may have an influence on college persistence through graduation or transfer of African American men who have been involved with the criminal justice system. The researchers are interested in gaining insight from you regarding your experiences at

PARTICIPATION

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary.

You are eligible to participate in this study because you are an African American male who has had contact with the criminal justice system and are now attending . If you agree to be part of this study, you will be asked a series of questions related to your experiences at .

POTENTIAL RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no known risks associated with this study.

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

This research is designed to examine factors that influence college persistence among African American men who have previously been involved with the criminal justice system.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Signing this form is required in order for you to take part in the study and gives the researcher your permission to obtain, use, and share information about you for this study. The results of this study could be published in an article but would not include any information that would identify you. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see the information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is conducted safely and properly, including Ferris State University. In order to keep your information safe, the researchers will protect your anonymity and maintain your confidentiality. The data you provide will be stored in a locked file. The researchers will

retain the data for 3 years after which time the researchers will dispose of your data by standard state of the art methods for secure disposal. The data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The main researcher conducting this study is Ida Short, a doctoral student at Ferris State University. If you have any questions you may email her at _____ or call _____

You may also contact Dr Sandra Balkema, the faculty advisor for the study by emailing SandraBalkema@ferris.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a subject in this study, please contact: Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants, 1010 Campus Drive, FLITE 410D, Big Rapids, MI 49307, (231) 591-2553, IRB@ferris.edu.

SIGNATURES

Research Subject: I understand the information printed on this form. I understand that if I have more questions or concerns about the study or my participation as a research subject, I may contact the people listed above in the “Contact Information” section. I understand that I may make a copy of this form. I understand that if my ability to consent for myself changes, either I or my legal representative may be asked to re-consent prior to my continued participation.

Signature of Subject: _____ Date of Signature: _____
Printed Name: _____
Contact Information: email - _____ phone - _____

Researcher: I have given this research subject information about this study that I believe is accurate and complete. The subject has indicated that he or she understands the nature of the study and the risks and benefits of participating.

Printed Name: _____ Title: _____
Signature: _____ Date of Signature: _____

APPENDIX C: INTRODUCTORY EMAIL

Dear _____,

I am a student in the Doctorate in Community College Leadership program at Ferris State University and am working on a dissertation project designed to provide an academic probation model based on best practices for community colleges.

To inform this project I am conducting interviews with African American men who had contact with the criminal justice system and are enrolled at Wayne County Community College District (). I am contacting you to see if you would be willing to answer a series of questions about your experiences at WCCCD.

Your participation in this study is voluntary which is explained along with other details in the informed consent form. When interviews are completed, I will use pseudonyms for participants and their institutions to protect the anonymity of all participants.

If you have any questions, please give me a call at 313-744-2995 or send an email to idacarolshort@gmail.com.

I hope to hear from you soon,

Ida Short

APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH

1010 Campus Drive FLITE 410 Big Rapids, MI 49307 | (231) 591-2553 | www.ferris.edu/irb

Date: September 12, 2018

To: Sandra Balkema, Ida Short

From: Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair

Re: IRB Application *IRB-FY17-18-165 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE COLLEGE PERSISTENCE BY AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN WHO HAVE HAD ENCOUNTERS WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM*

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "*FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE COLLEGE PERSISTENCE BY AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN WHO HAVE HAD ENCOUNTERS WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM*" (*IRB-FY17-18-165*) and Approved this project under Federal Regulations Expedited Review 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Approval has an expiration date of one year from the date of this letter. **As such, you may collect data according to the procedures outlined in your application until September 12, 2019.** Should additional time be needed to conduct your approved study, a request for extension must be submitted to the IRB a month prior to its expiration.

Your protocol has been assigned project number IRB-FY17-18-165. Approval mandates that you follow all University policy and procedures, in addition to applicable governmental regulations. Approval applies only to the activities described in the protocol submission; should revisions need to be made, all materials must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to initiation. In addition, the IRB must be made aware of any serious and unexpected and/or unanticipated adverse events as well as complaints and non-compliance issues.

Understand that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and participant rights with assurance of participant understanding, followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document and investigators maintain consent records for a minimum of three years. As mandated by Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 (45 CFR 46) the IRB requires submission of annual reviews during the life of the research project and a Final Report Form upon study completion. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Please let us know if the IRB can be of any future assistance.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory Wellman'.