EXAMINING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CORECTIONAL EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY GIVING VOICE TO THE EXPERIENCES OF INMATE LEARNERS

by

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ABSTRACT

The United States accounts for 5% of the global population, yet nearly 25% of the world's prison population. Approximately two million people are incarcerated, and 90% of these individuals will be released. Within three years of post-release, 60% of those individuals will have successfully reintegrated into society and 40% will have returned to prison. The three-year cost of reincarceration including criminal justice processes and corrections is estimated between $2.07 and $2.28 million. However, calculating societal costs burdened by families and communities is rarely identified in the literature.

Preventing reincarceration is of interest to policy makers and social justice entities. The Correctional Education Movement began in 1789 and has made tremendous advancements based on empirical research. Inmates who participated in correctional education programs had a 43% less chance of recidivating than inmates who did not, a savings of five dollars on reincarceration costs for every dollar spent on correctional education, approximately $1,400 to $1,744 annually per inmate.

A void in qualitative research, specifically from the inmate learner's experience exists. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to contribute to the evidence base of correctional education. The inmate learner's perspective was selected as the core element to acknowledge its absence in the literature. Research questions examined program access, enrollment, and participation. Seven one-on-one interviews were completed with adults who experienced the phenomenon of being an inmate learner in state-operated facilities.

KEY WORDS: Correctional Education, Reincarceration, and Inmate Learner

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Where This Study Began

I have taught hundreds of incarcerated students and have been serendipitous to cross paths with some of them after their incarceration. One student in particular, who is pseudo named Ashton, propelled my desire to learn more about correctional education from the perspective of an inmate student. In response, I began reading literature on correctional education and realized a substantial void from the voice of incarcerated populations. Hence, this sparked my curiosity even more!

At the time I met Ashton, he was sixteen years old and recently expelled from public school. Ashton was incarcerated in a juvenile facility for drug charges and disturbing schools. He was adjusting to the culture and rules of incarceration. Ashton was a compliant inmate and studious in my classroom where I taught a Life Skills Training curriculum (Botvin, 2007). He actively engaged in learning both individually and with groups. He respected classroom rules and enjoyed experiential learning activities. I remember he said in class one day that if he took [public] school more seriously that he probably wouldn't be incarcerated. The other approximately fifteen male inmate students agreed with him. Ashton's comment resonated with me and the other students. Ashton was eventually released, and it was a year later we crossed paths in the community.

I was attending an adult education program graduation ceremony as a community agency representative. I was on stage among the other representatives supporting the graduates and the program. I remember observing the proud smiles of the graduates and their families, while

reminiscing of my own graduation from an alternative education program. Just like Ashton, I experienced being labeled delinquent and at risk.

The graduation ceremony began with the Superintendent acknowledging the "Student-of-the-Year." The Superintendent and teachers spoke about the remarkable academic and life achievements the unnamed student accomplished. To my delighted surprise, it was Ashton named the Student-of-the-Year! I watched him walk across the stage wearing regalia and a proud smile, as he received the well-deserved award. I remembered him in a state-issued uniform and now in graduation regalia; I felt happiness soar through me!

I remembered Ashton's comment in the classroom about taking school seriously. At that moment, I thought about what it meant to Ashton to take school seriously and what support he had upon reentry to society. I thought about the Life Skills Training curriculum I taught and the correctional facility staff. I also remembered the revolving door at the facility and the frequent reincarceration of juvenile offenders. I pondered about what the differences could be between Ashton, his peers, and adults reentering society after longer periods of incarceration. My thoughts immediately became actions and essentially the literature review for this dissertation research began.

The History of Correctional Education

The United States has been the world's leader in incarceration for decades and has been deemed a mass incarceration crisis (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). Drilling down into the data, the United States accounts for 5% of the global population, yet nearly 25% of the world's prison population (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016; Liptak, 2008). Nearly 1.5 million people per year are incarcerated in American prisons (Carson, 2020; Sawyer & Wagner, 2020; Kaeble & Glaze, 2016). Of those individuals, 40% do not have a high school education at the time they entered

prison (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016; Roman, Kane, Turner, & Frazier, 2006). Additionally, more than 11 million people cycled through local jails in 2015 (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017). Furthermore, one in 37 adults were under some form of correctional supervision at year end 2015 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016; Kaeble & Glaze, 2016).

Overall, 90% of inmates will be released from incarceration at some point (Linton, 2004). More than 700,000 individuals will exit incarceration annually in the United States (Davis, Boziak, & Steele, 2013). Within three years post-release, 60% of those individuals will have successfully reintegrated into society, while the other 40% will have committed new crimes and return to prison (Davis et al., 2014, p. xiii; Linton, 2004).

The literature is largely focused on measuring recidivism as an outcome measure for defining successful reentry after incarceration. Common variables taken into consideration include an individual's employment status, education level, housing situation, counseling, substance abuse treatment, and social support systems (Petersilia, 2004; Ross, 2009). However, one integral factor for successful reentry is education and skills training (Davis et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2014; Brazzell, Crayton, Mukamal, Solomon, & Lindahl, 2009; Gaes, 2008; Batiuk, Moke, & Rountree, 1997). Yet the literature is lacking research that considers the inmate student perspective of the experience. Specifically, capturing the elements of programming and identifying what works and doesn't as it relates to post-release success is significantly lacking.

The Correctional Education Movement began in the United States in 1789 with clergyman William Rogers offering instruction to inmates at Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail (Rothman & Morris, 1998). The objective of its implementation was rehabilitation and that has not swayed over the decades. Researchers have validated its contribution to a successful return to society (Davis et al., 2014 & Linton, 2004). Chappell (2002) asserts that the higher the

educational attainment of a correctional client, the higher the reduction of recidivism is likely to occur. This study supports why both academic and vocational programs are provided in correctional institutions across the nation. The federal government has committed to supporting correctional education for decades yet has neglected to substantiate research contributions for its evidence based on curriculum and instruction targeting diverse and vulnerable populations. The most recent research was sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (Davis et al., 2013, 2014).

This substantial research study consisted of a meta-analysis on the effectiveness on correctional education. The findings asserted that inmates who participated in correctional education programs had a 43% less chance of recidivating than inmates who did not. Additionally, correctional education programs reduced the risk of post-release reincarceration by 13%. The cost effectiveness of correctional education validated a savings of five dollars on reincarceration costs for every dollar spent on correctional education.

A larger monetary scale revealed the return on investment of correctional education versus reincarceration costs are substantially in favor for supporting educational programs for incarcerated populations. The figures reported that reincarceration costs are $870,000 to $970,000 less for those who receive correctional education (Davis et al., 2013).

Additionally, the study included a hypothetical research example that estimated the cost effectiveness of correctional education programs and of incarceration itself. The formula only considered direct costs such as staff, materials, and tangible items. The hypothetical results estimated three-year reincarceration costs of those who did not receive correctional education would be between $2.94 million and $3.25 million versus inmates who received correctional education. The three-year reincarceration costs would be between $2.07 million and $2.28

million. The costs of providing education to inmates would range from $140,000 to $174,400 for the pool of 100 inmates. This translates into correctional education cost ranging from $1,400 to $1,744 per inmate.

The Importance of Research for Correctional Education

This compelling information was critically important in my decision to design a phenomenological study that would examine correctional education program features that would bring attention to what works and does not work from the inmate student perception. There are minimal amounts of research on this subject from the inmate student perspective and less can be found written by prisoners. I located one essay written by prisoners in which they reference themselves as the "other." The authors assert that correctional education serves critically important roles that include both during incarceration benefits and contributions towards a successful return to society (Reaz, Caudill, Diedrich, Johnson, Key & Mains, 2019).

The most fundamental truth of the correctional education experience is that of the inmate student (participant). Exposing the truth of the experience allows reason to be pursued from there (Musk, 2018). I identified reasons for this study to include fiduciary responsibility with public funds and social justice related issues. I was driven to design a phenomenological study that specifically cared to understand the truth of the experience as an adult inmate in a state-operated prison to access, enroll, and participate in correctional education—to give the inmate student voice an opportunity to be heard.

My initial research interest was broadly focused on learning about correctional education opportunities in state-operated facilities, reasons why inmates enrolled, and how the educational experience affected post release living. My final research goal was to have an indelible contribution towards advancing the evidence base of correctional education.

The methodology for this study was a qualitative phenomenological design. The philosophy behind phenomenology research is that a universal lived-experience is shared among individuals and the essence can be identified and described (Creswell, 2009; Van Manen, 2016). I was able to identify thematic saturation through one-on-one interviews with seven participants who experienced correctional education in a state-operated facility. I was able to illustrate a picture of the prison classroom environment and inmate student needs through identification of five emergent themes and seven sub-categories.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain the perspective of correctional education from the inmate student vantage point. Specifically, I wanted to learn about state-operated facilities in the Southeastern region of the United States and program features such as academic and non-academic assessments, career counseling, physical classroom space, resources, staff, course scheduling, materials, etc. I intentionally designed semi-structured interview questions to explore participants' pre-, during, and post-incarceration educational experiences. During incarceration questions specifically sought insight into what the experience of accessing programs entailed and characteristics of the classroom.

I used a purposive sampling method to identify eligible interview participants. Criteria included experience related to correctional education, not currently under correctional supervision, age 18 or older, and able to articulate an understanding of the study. I conducted one pilot interview that was not included in the final data set. The data sample set included seven participants that consisted of six males, one female, and an average age of 49 years old. Out of the seven participants, four had earned a General Education Diploma, two earned a high school diploma, and one had not earned a high school credential. Two of the participants had post-secondary experience, with one having an earned credential.

The research questions were intentionally designed to efficiently capture participants' educational history, specifically their correctional education experiences. The primary research question was, "What is the lived-experience of correctional education as an adult inmate student in a state-operated correctional facility in the Southeastern region of the United States?" Secondary research questions supported the primary research question and were placed into four different groupings: General Questions about Education, Pre-Incarceration, During-Incarceration, and Post-Incarceration.

The first group of questions focused on the seven participants' overall educational experiences and their current perspective regarding formal education. Specifically, how they define academic success and what success in life means to them. These questions asked about negative and positive experiences in an educational setting. I asked participants' what their perceptions were of their family's and peer's values regarding education. The second group of questions focused on the educational experiences prior to incarceration. The third group of interview questions focused on the participants' educational experience while incarcerated. These questions specifically sought insight into what their experience was in accessing programs while incarcerated and what the prison classroom was like. One area targeted was the type of programming available and its duration as well as what resources were available for those enrolled. I also asked questions about the reasons they chose to participate in a program, types of instruction strategies used, characteristics of instructors, and the availability of academic and career advisement. Finally, the fourth group of post- incarceration questions focused on whether the participants' engaged in education programs after their release, what type of certificates or degrees they earned, and the funding sources of programs attended. I wrapped up this group of

questions by asking about the amount of support in general they felt like they had after their release to have a stable life in society.

A total of five themes and seven sub-categories emerged. Themes represent the largest categories and sub-categories support the themes. This study is organized into five chapters.

Summary

Chapter One begins with a personal experience that resonated my decision to pursue this research study. This chapter includes background and historical information regarding the research phenomena, defines the problem statement, and research goals. Chapter Two reviews the literature on correctional education in the United States and criminological theories. This chapter also reviews andragogy, risk and protective theory, and other social science theories as they related to my data analysis. Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodology, research questions, role of the researcher, and how the quality of the research was measured. Chapters Four and Five of this study present my data analysis results supported with rich descriptions.

I designed this phenomenological study to address voids in the literature about what does and does not work in correctional education (Davis, et al., 2013). This study doesn't end with a conclusion. Rather, it is an invitation for other researchers to begin possible research endeavors to better understand the nuance of correctional education.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review is organized into three major sections and several subtopics with the goal of demonstrating previously researched concepts related to correctional education. The first section reviews the current state and goals of corrections in the United States. The second section focuses on education, recidivism, and the economic benefits of education. Also, psychological and sociological theories that are related to correctional education are discussed including the following areas of risk and needs, motivation, and criminogenic thinking. The section focuses on the history and current state of correctional education. Academic correctional education is defined as adult basic education, post-secondary credit-bearing credentials, and English as a Second Language (ESL).

Introduction to Correctional Education

Incarceration is defined as the act of legally imposing deprivation of personal liberty in a facility designed to house individuals. The United States is considered a major industrialized nation and has the highest incarceration rate in the world ranking with more than 1.5 million people or 716 of every 100,000 (Sams-Abiodun, Patterson, & Isserlis, 2017; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). The United States is home to 5% of the world's population, but 25% of its prisoners (Pfaff, 2017, p. 2). The only other industrialized country in the world with a high incarceration rate is Russia, with 627 prisoners for every 100,000 people. Liptak (2008) cites other comparable industrialized countries that have much lower rates per 100,000; England at 151, Germany at 88, and Japan at 63: "The median among all nations is about 125, roughly a

sixth of the American rate" (Liptak, 2008, p. 2). The National Research Council (2014) equivocates that one of every 100 American adults are incarcerated in prison or jail. The United States leads the world in other critical issues such as economics, military power, largest in terms of gross domestic product, most technologically powerful, has the largest coal reserves, and home to one of the world's top universities, Harvard University (Erbentraut, 2017). Being such an advanced nation, it is evident throughout the literature review that the government has prioritized prison reform in America for the 21st century.

Timeline of American Corrections

Crime and punishment are components within all cultures and regions of the world and have continuously evolved since its early documentation during biblical times. Documentation of criminal justice systems and practices date back to the earliest record of humanity. Early punishments were torturous and could be defined under the doctrine of *lex talionis*, the law of retaliation; it may be expressed as "an eye for an eye" or "like for like." The American correctional system has four main types of philosophies: just deserts/retribution, deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation (Akers & Sellers, 2012). Theories are useful tools that help with understanding events. In the study of criminology, theories help with understanding the functions of the criminal justice system and those who are involved with it. The goals of American corrections today include care, custody, and control with the over-arching goal of the protection of society. The chronology of corrections includes (Bosworth, 2005, pp. xxix-xxxi):

- 1830s – Jacksonian Era
- 1870-1919 – Reformatory Era
- 1890s-1930 – Progressive Era
- 1930s-1960s – Medical Model

- 1960s-1970s – Community Model
- 1980s-2000s – Crime Control Model
- 2012-present – Evidence-Based Era

Just deserts or retribution as a theory of punishment serves that legal sanctions should be commensurate with the seriousness of the offense (Sloan & Miller, 1990). A common phrase to summarize retribution is, "The punishment should fit the crime." Retribution was incorporated into criminal justice practice and theory during the "Classical School" and The Jacksonian Era (1824-1840) when practices of the lock step, rules of silence, and long hours of isolation were forms of punishment. The Classical School of thought is centered on individual decision making and the notion that individuals have the ability to make rational choices; therefore, criminal behavior is a choice. The Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution both reflect The Classical School of thought (Akers & Sellers, 2012). The Justice Model of corrections is a component of retribution theory and is based on the concept that the criminal justice system should not include rehabilitation. The focus is on the fair administration of punishments appropriate to the severity of the crime committed (Hudson, 1987). The Justice Model is comprised of eight components (Cullen & Gilbert, 2015):

1. Determinate sentences
2. Sentences should be legislatively fixed and narrow
3. Punishment is not intended to provide social benefits
4. Sentences should be reduced
5. Judges have discretion with sentencing
6. Parole release should be abolished
7. Rehabilitation programs should be voluntary

8. Prison conditions should humane

Cullen and Gilbert (2015) criticized The Justice Model as being too rigid and that discretion should not be in the power of the state (p. 121). Criminal justice policy should include rehabilitative efforts that hold value in sentencing and focus on the future through incorporation of evidence-based intervention and treatment programs.

To deter is to prevent something from occurring. The basis of Deterrence Theory is that an individual has free-will and weighs the pros and cons before a criminal act. This utilitarian philosophy is also from a classical school of thought during the 18th century. Jeremy Bentham and Cesare Beccaria are the leading philosophers in deterrence theory. They proposed that individuals seek pleasure over pain and will make a decision that maximizes benefits and minimizes losses (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002, p. 285).

Deterrence Theory states that crime can be controlled through the use of punishments that combine the proper degrees of the three elements identified in Bentham and Beccaria's research: certainty, severity, and celerity (Akers& Sellers, 2012; Burns & Hart, 2005; Nagin, 2013). Certainty refers to the likelihood an individual will be caught and punished for a crime that he or she committed. Severity refers to how harsh the punishment for a crime will be. The severity must be equal to the crime and not too harsh or lenient. The third element, celerity, refers to the timeliness a punishment occurs after committing a crime (Akers, 2000, p. 16).

The two forms of deterrence theory include general and specific. General deterrence is the doctrine that people will refrain from committing a criminal act based upon the witness of someone else doing it and observing their consequences. Specific deterrence is applied to an individual. The belief that when an individual is punished for a criminal act, then that individual will be less likely to reoffend in the future (Akers & Sellers, 2012). Deterrence theory is

teleological, a future-forward ideology and is both preventative and intervention-based. Example programs include Scared Straight (1970s) and boot camps where fear and incarceration are the forms of punishment capitalized on.

Deterrence is a key element in the United States justice system and is at the core of long prison sentences. The National Institute of Justice (2016) indicates five points about deterrence based upon empirical data to bring an awareness about understanding the relationship between sentencing and deterrence theory. The five phings about Deterrence include:

1. The certainty of being caught is a vastly more powerful deterrent than the punishment. The idea of being caught is more effective of a deterrent than the legal punishment itself.

2. Sending an individual convicted of a crime to prison isn't a very effective way to deter crime. Prisons are good for the goal of incapacitating one to keep them out of society. In regard to deterring future crime, however, the likelihood has not been validated through research.

3. Police deter crime by increasing the perception that criminals will be caught and punished. Criminal behavior is more likely influenced if the perception of being caught is increased.

4. Increasing the severity of punishment does little to deter crime. Laws and policies designed to deter based upon severity are not validated by research.

5. There is no proof that the death penalty deters criminals.

According to Nagin (2013), there is no research on the deterrent effect of capital punishment whether it increases, decreases, or has no effect on homicide rates. General and specific deterrence policies and programs in the United States rely heavily on current empirical data. Incarceration serves the goal of punishment, but more recently research has brought an awareness to the appropriateness of incarceration policies and sentencing relevant to the age of the offender and offense itself. Data indicates that after age 35, a more severe prison sentence is

not a cost-effective way to deter future crimes by aging individuals (Sampson, Laub, & Eggleston, 2004). Regarding juvenile populations and deterrent policies, the first time of arrest during high school nearly doubles the odds of high school "stop" out, while a court appearance nearly quadruples the odds of "stopping" out. The first-time court appearance for a juvenile is more detrimental in regard to leaving high school in comparison to first time arrest without a court appearance (Bernburg & Krohn, 2003, p. 16). Criminal justice policy makers rely on research in order to create fair and just policies that are age- and developmental-appropriate.

Incapacitation theory is the penal confinement and restraint of convicted individuals. Incapacitation theory justifies imprisonment and achieves crime prevention because convicted offenders are incarcerated and not in the community where they can commit future crimes (Cullen & Jonson, 2016; Nagin, 2013; Zimring & Hawkins, 1995, p.158). Zimring and Hawkins (1995) connected incapacitation's necessity to the criminal justice system to satisfy the three goals of crime control, punishment of the offender, and serving justice.

The two types of incapacitation are collective and selective (Cullen & Jonson, 2016). Collective incapacitation is when prison is used to lock up everyone who has committed a specific crime (e.g., simple assault). Selective incapacitation is when an effort is made to predict who will be high-rate offenders and incarcerate only those people (Cullen & Jonson, 2016, p. 7). Both types of incapacitation satisfy the theory's goal of achieving crime prevention, because the theory states that removing convicted offenders from society protects society (Tonry, 1998, p. 362).

Cullen and Jonson (2016) have identified three flaws with incapacitation theory that allow for scientific research to draw empirical conclusions: (1) The main function of correctional facilities is to house offenders, so the main advice for correctional policy is to build more

"cages" to house more offenders; (2) Incapacitation does not address reentry issues; and (3) Incapacitation does not address recidivism.

Empirical evidence and scholarly attention concentrated on incapacitation theory has been minimal and sporadic (Nagin, 2013; Zimring & Hawkins, 1995, p. 3). According to Nagin (2013), "Research evidence now shows that simply caging off, placing them in prison and doing little else, typically either leaves their criminogenic propensities unchanged or strengthens them" (p. 3). Current literature acknowledges the punitive component to incapacitation, however, places its existence within a multi-systematic approach to addressing criminogenic factors related to the cause of criminal thinking and behaviors, therefore, connecting both incapacitation and rehabilitation theories.

Rehabilitation is derived from the Latin word, "rehabilitate," and is defined as "re-enabling" to "make fit again." In correctional context it means to prepare prisoners to rejoin society as useful and law-abiding members (Craig, Dixon, & Gannon, 2013, p. 4). Rehabilitation theory contains three core concepts: (1) The intervention is planned; (2) The intervention targets for change some aspect about the offender that is thought to cause the offender's criminality, such as his or her attitudes, cognitive processes, personality or mental health, social relationships to others, educational and vocational skills, and employment; and (3) The intervention is intended to make the offender less likely to break the law in the future—that is, it reduces recidivism (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000, p. 112).

Rehabilitation of criminal offenders notably began in the late 1800s to the early 1900s through evidence of indeterminate sentencing, parole, probation, and a separate juvenile justice system. In 1867, the first federal statute providing for the reduction of sentences based upon good conduct was enacted. The Department of Justice was created in 1870 followed in 1910 with

the creation of the federal parole system. Zebulon Brockway (1871) was a leader of utilitarian efforts, designing interventions to be useful or practical rather than attractive. Brockway proclaimed the prison should exist to protect society from criminal offenders and reform the criminal themselves (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000, p. 115).

The Federal Juvenile Delinquency Act was approved in 1938 observing the necessity to process and treat juveniles separate from adults (Fulwood, 2003, p. 5). In the early 1970s, rehabilitation policies and practices were negatively publicized after Robert Martinson's (1974) essay, "What Works? Questions and Answers about Prison Reform" aka "Nothing Works" was published. The essay authored by Martinson was a compilation of 231 research studies that were conducted to evaluate correctional treatments between 1945-1967. Martinson and his colleagues concluded that they were unable to identify any offender treatment program that substantially reduced recidivism (Martinson, 1974). Decades of correctional treatment programs and research have countered Martinson's essay to validate rehabilitative program variables with empirical data to show reductions in recidivism.

Promising rehabilitation treatment programs must have a 'multi-systemic therapy' approach (Henggeler, Pickrel, & Brondino 1999). This type of approach will target various components of an individual including individual characteristics and outside influences. Individual characteristics include and are not limited to, personality traits, cognitive function, and values. Outside influences include community, social, and economic influences. "Theoretical Integration" occurs when two or more theories are combined to make a new theory to explain criminal activity in a more comprehensive manner (Henry & Lukas, 2016, p. 6). "Theoretical Integration" is similar to "multi-systemic therapy" because it doesn't define one approach to treating an offender. Both practices take multiple variables into consideration to assist with

rehabilitation efforts and are comprehensive in nature. Studying criminology lies within the social sciences, which is more challenging to study compared to pure science. Social scientists have made researching human behavior and thoughts into scientific studies, thus creating scientific data on what works to reduce recidivism: "Rehabilitation reduces recidivism, and its use is supported by the public" (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000, p. 113).

Cullen and Gilbert (2015) have presented four goals of rehabilitation based upon decades of evidence that disputes Martinson's "Nothing Works" essay. Knowledge of how to rehabilitate offenders and the technology to implement practices are readily available. The four goals include (1) Rehabilitation efforts should be made to capitalize on the publics continued embrace of rehabilitation as a core goal of corrections; (2) Rehabilitation should be evidence-based; (3) Interventions with antisocial youth should start early in life and continue; and (4) Correctional officials must be made accountable for lower recidivism rates (p. xiv). These four goals as presented address the need for the social sciences to incorporate scientific data to strengthen research. Additionally, they include the public, the individual, and the criminal justice system. This approach is multi-systemic, which correlates with current criminological theory of addressing all components of criminal thinking errors as a spectrum that includes prevention, intervention, and treatment.

At year-end 2016, prisoners held under the jurisdiction of state and federal correctional authorities in the United States was 1,505,400, a 2% decrease from 2015 of 1,526,800 (Bureau of Justice [BJS], 2016). More than 700,000 incarcerated individuals were released from state and federal prisons annually, which is about 1,700 individuals daily. Additionally, over 95% of the prison population today will be eventually released and the majority of adults will return to impoverished communities (Lattimore, Steffery, & Visher, 2010, p. 2).

Correctional facilities range in security levels and are categorized either as jails or prisons. Jails are locally operated by law enforcement and/or government agencies. Individuals housed in a jail have different characteristics and legal scenarios compared to those in a prison. Individuals incarcerated in a jail usually include those serving sentences under a year in length, which include either misdemeanor or felony offenses, those awaiting trial, and/or sentencing. Individuals incarcerated in jails frequently present physical and mental health concerns more so than those in prison. For example, many have untreated mental health and substance abuse disorders, which also include active withdrawal symptoms. Physical illnesses, conditions, and injuries that have been untreated or recently happened; this includes hygiene-related conditions such as lice and scabies.

Prisons are operated by either state government or the Federal Bureau of Prisons and house those for longer-term, more than one-year sentences. Prison facilities vary in custody levels ranging from minimum, medium, and maximum and vary from state to state. Prisons also differentiate between juvenile and adult facilities (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016).

Literature regarding the experience of incarceration, recidivism, and correctional programming can be found among various disciplines including and not limited to criminal justice, history, education, psychology, sociology, and economics. Policy makers, taxpayers, and social scientists share a common theme in current literature that examines correctional programming. Prisoner rehabilitation has been a part of criminal justice policy since its inception over 200 years ago. The purpose of incarceration has had different purposes including corporal punishment, rehabilitation, or a combination of the two. The current state of correctional education has reached a critical point in history to move the field towards using science to support "what works."

According to the 2017 Prison Policy Initiative, one in five incarcerated people at the federal, state, and local levels are sentenced for a drug offense. The federal prison system houses approximately 197,000 inmates with non-violent drug convictions and public order offenses being the identifying characteristics of the inmate population (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017).

The Federal Bureau of Prisons 2018 statistical breakdown of convictions include in order of highest to least: Drug convictions (97,000); public order crimes (other public order, immigration, violent, and property) (71,000); violent crimes (robbery, other violent, and homicide); and property crimes (fraud, other property, other, and burglary) (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2018).

The National Correctional Reporting Program within the Federal Bureau of Justice Statistics 2016 report of state specific prison inmate population by convictions includes violent crimes as primary and in ranking order from highest to least: Murder, robbery, rape/sexual assault, assault, manslaughter, and other violent crimes. Secondary populations include property crimes in ranking order of burglary, theft, fraud, other property crimes, and car theft. Tertiary populations include drug related crimes. The fourth population category is public order crimes in ranking order of other public order, weapons, driving under the influence, and other category (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016).

The Second Chance Act of 2007 is a historic artifact for the fields of correctional education. The Second Chance Act's grant programs are funded and administered by the Office of Justice Programs within the U.S. Department of Justice. In 2010, funding was set aside for the study of correctional programming for the first time in history. The Rand Corporation and participating agencies have conducted studies that have revealed critical information relevant to correctional programming and re-entry initiatives across the nation. Findings that advocate for

rehabilitation through correctional education include (1) Inmates who participated in correctional education (postsecondary and other) were 43% less likely to recidivate than those who did not; and (2) The odds of obtaining employment among inmates who participated in correctional education programs are 48% higher than the odds of obtaining employment among inmates who did not (Davis et al., 2014, p. 14).

Successful reentry and reincarceration are two topics that impact advocacy and research for correctional education. "Successful reentry" is referred to as equipping individuals *prior* to their release date with career and life skills to support a prosocial lifestyle. These skills include technical/job related to support securing employment after release, attitudinal, and habits of mind that support a balanced and healthy life and fulfilling one's basic needs for survival such as shelter, food, and water (National Reentry Resource Center, 2017).

Reincarceration is defined as the violation of a law that results in one being incarcerated in either a local, state, or federal institution where one has previously been incarcerated. This may also be defined as recidivism, the act of criminal behavior by one who has previously been incarcerated (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016).

The cost of correctional education compared to reincarceration yields a savings of four to five dollars on average in cost savings for each dollar spent (Davis et al., 2014, p. iii). By expanding inmate skills, education, and general abilities, the transition from prison to community can be easier (Brazzell, Crayton, Mukamal, Solomon, & Lindahl, 2009). Investing in correctional education is the ultimate responsibility of both federal and state governments. The mission to drive the field of correctional programming towards evidence-based best practices has raised the attention of law makers, taxpayers, social scientists, and educational authorities.

Inmate Characteristics

Incarceration demographics of those in U.S. prisons include individuals from the most disadvantaged segments of society at-large (National Research Council, 2014). The majority of the demographics include African American and Hispanic men under age 40, who lack educational skills, have substance abuse disorders, mental health disorders, physical illness, and minimum work training, skills, and experience (Davis et al., 2013; Travis, Western & Redburn, 2014, p. 5).

Data from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities (1991 and 1997) indicate that inmates in federal and state prisons are significantly less educated than adults not incarcerated. High school dropout rates were also significantly different with 27% of federal inmates and 40% of state prison inmates, compared to 18% of adults not incarcerated (Klein, Tolbert, Bugarin, Cataldi, & Tauschek, 2004, p. 6).

In 2014, the U.S. Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) conducted a large-scale study of adult skills and life experiences created by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The PIAAC was "designed to provide information to policymakers, administrators, educators, and researchers who are developing education and training policies and programs for incarcerated adults" (Rampey et al., 2016, p.1). The PIAAC measures literacy, reading, numeracy, problem-solving, technology skills, and life skills. Results do not analyze relationships between variables, rather are available for continued assistance towards research.

The PIAAC reported that 66% of the survey respondents reported they were working prior to incarceration (49% full-time, 16% part-time, 19% were unemployed, and 4% were a student). The other 34% of respondents were not in the paid workforce and included the

unemployed, permanently disabled, retired, assisting family members with care, or in other unspecified situations (p. 9). Incarcerated adults with higher levels of education were more likely to have a prison job (p. 35). Specifically, 48% of inmates with less than a high school credential had prison jobs, compared to 73% of those with an associate's degree.

The literature supports that justice-involved individuals, on average, are less educated than the general population (Davis et al., 2014, p. xiii). A 2003 study reported that 63% of incarcerated adults had not completed high school and tested pre-high school in reading, math, and language skills. Literacy rates were reported as low as fifth grade. In addition, learning disabilities were reported ranging between 10%-26% for adult prison populations, compared to the general population of 6% (MacKenzie, 2011, p. 69).

Literacy rates among incarcerated adults are substantially lower than the general population (National Institute for Literacy, 2002; Greenberg, 2007). Table 1 demonstrates the levels of education between incarcerated and general populations in 2004.

Table 1
Education Levels of Compared Populations

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	INCARCERATED POPULATION (%)	GENERAL POPULATION (%)
Less than a high school education for 16 and over	37%	19%
Earned high school diploma	16.5	26
Some postsecondary education	14.4	51

Rampey and colleagues (2016) assert that many incarcerated individuals lack the knowledge, training, and soft-skills to support a successful reentry into society despite the fact that state-operated adult correctional institutions offer educational programming such as Adult Basic Education and vocational skills training programs. A study conducted by Steurer, Smith,

and Tracy (2003) reported that Adult Basic Education is offered in approximately 87% of all state and federal correctional facilities. In addition, higher education was identified in about 70% of states. Twenty-four states mandated GED courses for adult inmates without a high school credential (Davis et al., 2014, p. 77).

Authors Erisman and Contardo (2005) assert in a 50 state meta-analysis of post-secondary correctional education that barriers to inmate accessibility and participation include interruptions such as security lock downs, staffing shortages, and behavioral disturbances. Other barriers unique to a correctional environment include the high need of academic remediation (specifically in English and math), population overcrowding, and wait lists for courses (p. vi).

The 2014 PIAAC study reports that 70% of prisoner respondents to the survey wanted to enroll in an academic class or program, while only 21% of prisoners were active in a credentialed certificate or degree (Rampey et al., 2016, p. 27). Participation in academic correctional programming as reported by prisoners indicates the following data: 63% participated for self-improvement reasons, 43% participated to increase the possibilities of getting a job when released, and 18%, to increase the possibilities of getting a prison job assignment. Of prisoners who wanted to enroll, 41% indicated the reason was to increase knowledge or skills in a subject of interest, while 39% indicated they wanted to enroll to increase the likelihood of gaining employment upon release, and only 8% to increase the likelihood of getting a prison job assignment. Of incarcerated adults, 20% reported they did not want to enroll in an academic program because it was either not useful or was of poor quality. Of incarcerated adults who did not participate in programming, 30% reported they were ineligible (pp. 29-31). The percentage breakdown includes 11% not having the educational qualifications to attend and 30% reporting "not eligible" with no supportive reasons (p. 31).

The benefits of participating in an educational program while incarcerated have an abundance of literature related to the study of recidivism and reentry. However, the benefits begin while incarcerated as reported by incarcerated individuals. Tyler and Kling (2006) found that the skills obtained while preparing for the GED contribute more to post-release success than the credential itself. This is contributed to the acquired time management and repetitive study skills from the preparation process.

Inmate educational characteristics have demonstrated data trends that support higher high school dropout rates, lower literacy rates, lower socio-economic standing, and lower life-skills. These characteristics have been researched and documented since the early 1900s (Brazzell et al., 2009, p. 13). Prisoner rehabilitation through education is a 200-year-old research question. Identifying inmate characteristics, assessing correctional programming, and researching recidivism have been tactics applied to address possible solutions.

The Beginning of Correctional Education

The Penitentiary Era (1790-1825) was highlighted with the start of Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail by the Pennsylvania Quakers (Roberts, 1997, p. 31). Incarceration was viewed as an opportunity for penance and for offenders to take responsibility for their crime against society. Rehabilitation was introduced through literacy instructed by a volunteer clergyman. The educational goal was the development of literacy skills in order to read the Bible. The Pennsylvania system heralded humane treatment of offenders and the opportunity for rehabilitation.

In 1847 New York passed an act that supported inmate literacy. The act mandated common school teachers to be hired by the State Department of Corrections. The development of the New York State Prison at Auburn abandoned was preceded by the Pennsylvania system

model around 1820. The Auburn system implemented new rules of silence, manual labor work, and corporal punishment to manage inmate behavior. The two systems competed with each other in the United States until The Reformatory Era of 1876-1890 when rehabilitation theory was beginning to be recognized by leaders in corrections (Reich, 1994).

The National Prison Association (NPA) was founded in 1870 and changed its name in 1954 to the American Correctional Association (ACA) to more appropriately reflect the philosophy of corrections and the profession's responsibility to society (Hockenberry & Puzzanchera, 2015). The ACA is the oldest association developed for practitioners in the correctional profession. The Declaration of Principles developed in 1870 at the first meeting became noted as correctional practice guidelines for the United States and Europe. The principles were updated in 1982 and later in 2002. The ACA's philosophy on corrections is rehabilitative in nature: "To assist in the prevention and control of delinquency and crime, but ultimately the prevention of criminal and delinquent behavior depends on the will of the individual and the constructive qualities of society and its basic entities: family, community, school, religion, and government" (American Correctional Association [ACA], 2002). The ACA's principles include humanity, justice, protection, opportunity, knowledge, competence, and accountability as the features of correctional policy and effective public protection.

Elmira Reformatory in New York was led by Zebulon Brockway in 1876 under the operational components of mandatory education, vocational programs, and behavioral conditions (Roberts, 1997, p. 63). Additionally, Brockway incorporated a healthy diet, exercise, and other fitness-related activities for inmates. Elmira Reformatory introduced individual school records on inmates and supported individually prescribed instruction (IPI). Elmira was the first institution to implement behavior reports, specifically education, to time served. The IPI method

was later adopted by prison and education reformers and implemented in other institutions (Roberts, 1997, p. 65). Unfortunately, Elmira Reformatory did not demonstrate rehabilitative success in its era, but the principles it was established on are historical markers in correctional educational history (Bosworth, 2005).

The rise of the labor movement (1866) was one of the most recognized events for correctional education (Bosworth, 2005). Education programs evolved in prisons as a result of legislation that restricted the role of prison industries in the United States. Education programs provided inmates with skills necessary for prison operations and maintenance (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2016).

The Federal Bureau of Prisons was passed by Congress by 1930. The Bureaus' first director was Sanford Bates, and he implemented correctional education programs in all federal facilities (Schmalleger, 2015, p. 7). The Correctional Education Association (CEA) was also established in 1930. The CEA was established with the mission to prepare "correctional students" for successful reentry into society through educational, career/technical, and social skills.

The CEA's philosophy also supports correctional educators, communities, and legislative advocacy. The CEA's philosophy states, "Education is the key to effective rehabilitation." The mission and vision statements support all aspects of promoting and sustaining correctional education for the ultimate goal of successful reentry and permanency into society as productive "citizens, parents, and coworkers" (Correctional Education Association, 2020).

The end of World War II brought the passing of the G.I. Bill. This bill contributed to legislative changes for veterans, correctional education, and adult education. The G.I. Bill emphasized education as a means to rehabilitation. In 1953, the University of Southern Illinois

offered post-secondary education to correctional populations (Hall, 2006). By 1965, only twelve correctional education programs were identified in the United States, but history changed with Congress passing the Title IV of the Higher Education Act in 1965 (Hegji, 2014). Federal Pell grants awarded student aid for postsecondary education based upon financial need, which was the majority of the correctional population (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011).

Title IV had a massive effect of correctional education programs. By 1973, over 182 programs were available, and by 1982, over 350 programs were available in 90% of the United States (Taylor, 1993). Correctional programs were thriving in the United States during this time period with Title IV funding, federal and state support, and rehabilitative missions among state department of corrections. However, during the same time period correctional programming was thriving, its biggest threat was being prepared.

Martinson's (1974) essay on prison reform concluded that few rehabilitative programs had any effect on recidivism (Craig et al., 2013). As noted, the main interpretation of his findings led to media headlines titled, "Nothing Works." In 1979, Martinson published a follow-up essay to support validated findings; however, the damage had been done to the field of correctional rehabilitation. Critics of rehabilitation had the 1974 essay to gain momentum in efforts against correctional programming.

Conservative efforts to reduce funding that supported correctional programming were proposed to lawmakers for two decades; however, bills were not passed until 1993. The 1993 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act and the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1994 were historical events for the demise of incarcerated individual's eligibility for Pell grants (DiMambro, 2007). Lawmakers were swayed to support the notion of discontinuing

eligibility of Pell grants for incarcerated individuals based upon the notion that it took away federal funding for non-incarcerated, law-abiding students.

Professional organizations that promote for incarcerated individuals to receive the Federal Pell grant have provided research that verifies the effectiveness of post-secondary education during incarceration and its relationship to reducing recidivism (Davis et al., 2014). These efforts were not successful and Pell grant funding was discontinued by Congress in 1994 for incarcerated individuals beginning in the 1995-1996 academic year (Davis et al., 2014).

The Workforce and Community Transition Training for Incarcerated Youth Offenders Program (IYO) was a source of funding for postsecondary and vocational education for incarcerated individuals, 25 or younger, who had an earned GED or high school diploma, and were within five years of release. The 2008 passage of the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act raised the age to 35 (Cohen & Brawer, 2009, p. 331). The 2008 passage of the Second Chance Act by Congress was a milestone for postsecondary correctional education. The act was an opportunity for rehabilitative efforts to be implemented with federal funding support. However, many incarcerated individuals still had to pay for postsecondary coursework with their own funding source (Linton, 2004).

The federal decision had an immediate effect on post-secondary correctional education in the United States. The majority of postsecondary programs were discontinued, yet some states continued programs with the support of private funders or inmates paid themselves. By 1997, only 21 states, enrolling 2% of the total prison population, offered post-secondary educational credentials to incarcerated individuals (Erisman & Contardo, 2005).

In 2009, President Obama made a commitment to criminal justice reform and to use education as a tactic (Robinson & English, 2017, p. 3). The Obama administration created the

Second Chance Pell Program in July 2015 as a pilot program under the Higher Education Act's Experimental Sites Initiative (ESI) authority. The ESI authority allows the Department of Education to waive specific federal rules for the benefit of experimentation (Wexler, 2016).

The goal of the Second Chance Pell Program was to "test whether participation in high-quality educational opportunities increases after access to financial aid for incarcerated adults is expanded and examine how waiving the restriction on providing Pell Grants to individuals incarcerated in Federal or State penal institutions influences academic and life outcomes" (Wexler, 2016, p. 3).

The Department of Education announced a call to action on August 3, 2015, by inviting higher education institutions to apply to participate in the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program. More than 200 institutions applied and 67 schools across the nation were selected by June 2016. Universities and two-year colleges agreed to provide a partnership with specific correctional institutions and credit-bearing college credentials including certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees. The 67 selected institutions would partner with more than 100 state and federal correctional facilities to enroll approximately 12,000 inmates (Wexler, 2016).

Instruction of programs varied amongst sites based upon availability of instructors, technology, and supportive labs. Approved postsecondary credit programs in the pilot program must demonstrate an employment need for high-demand occupations relevant to the geographic area it serves. Inmate eligibility varies from site to site; however, inmates eligible for release from the correctional facility within five years will be given priority.

The federal budget allocated approximately $30 million for the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, similar to the pre-1994 Pell for prisoner's expenditures. This amount is less than one percent of overall Pell spending of approximately $28 billion. Individual awards in 2016 were

similar to a non-incarcerated student Pell aid amount of $5,775. Pell grants for the incarcerated student are capped at six years and support one year of developmental coursework if needed (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Collateral Consequences of Incarceration

Incarceration costs are dynamic and encompass social, economic, and monetary values. Incarceration costs for juveniles and adults have been characterized by social scientists as the interruption of "social capital accumulation" (Aizer & Doyle, 2015). When individuals are incarcerated, they are not the only ones effected. Their family, friends, employers, victims, communities, the economy, and society at-large suffer negative consequences (National Research Council, 2014). Measuring direct and indirect costs of incarceration are two separate tasks and areas of research.

The direct costs of incarceration for prisons and jails include facilities, food/water, medical expenses, religious accommodations, and correctional staff. Programming availability and costs vary between prisons and jails due to the nature of the institution's purposes. Examples of programming include mental health counseling, psychiatry, social work, substance-abuse treatment, cognitive behavioral treatment, sexual offender treatment, life skills curriculum, vocational, and educational programs (National Research Council, 2014).

The indirect costs of incarceration include legal services; individual physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health; loss of employment and earnings; and time away from families and children. Indirect costs have been aggregated to amount for every dollar in direct costs, ten dollars in social costs are incurred (McLaughlin, Davis, Brown, Veeh, & Renn, 2016, p. 2). Social costs are far more burdensome on offenders, their families, and society.

The U.S. spends approximately $80 billion annually on correctional direct costs (DeVuono-Powell, Schweidler, Walters, & Zohrabi, 2015). The annual estimate of incarcerating an adult in prison is $33,066 (McLaughlin et al., 2016, p. 8). A 2011 report for the Annie E. Casey Foundation states the sums of state and federal taxpayer dollars spent on incarcerating a juvenile for nine to 12 months is up to $88,000 a year, with states spending a combined $5 billion in 2008 (Aizer & Doyle, 2015).

The American Correctional Association (ACA) is dedicated to improving the justice system. The ACA's goals are to identify and advocate for model correctional practices for the offender while incarcerated and preparing them for success upon release for the betterment of him/herself and society. The ACA established a permanent committee on correctional education in 1930. The ACA focuses efforts of corrections to "assist in the prevention and control of delinquency and crime, but ultimately the prevention of criminal and delinquent behavior depends on the will of the individual and the constructive qualities of society and its basic entities: family, community, school, religion, and government" (American Correctional Association, 2002).

Recidivism

Recidivism is the repetition of criminal behavior and has multiple definitions throughout criminal justice literature such as reoffending, re-arrest, reconviction, re-incarceration, parole violation, and successful completion of parole (Davis et al., 2014, p. 13; Schmalleger, 2015). Predicting and measuring recidivism were the two areas identified in the literature review. Both areas include theory and current best-practices.

Recidivism is the most common form of measuring an individual's successful reentry into society throughout criminal justice research. Prisoners that are released are referenced as

"returning citizens" throughout current literature. Preventing recidivism is a common goal shared by various fields for similar reasons including the cost of incarceration and the betterment of society. The literature on recidivism reveals studies of correctional interventions and sanctions over the past several decades (Lattimore et al., 2010; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Holsinger, 2006). The results have contributed to the movement of evidence-based correctional practices and programming also referenced as the "what works" literature (Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Holsinger, 2006, p. 521). Predicting recidivism includes various types of research that includes the social sciences and brain development (The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2015; Craig et al., 2013; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Holsinger, 2006).

In a multistate criminal history patterns report for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Durose, Cooper, and Snyder (2014) report an estimated 43% of prisoners were arrested for a new crime either within the state of release or in another state within the first year of release. Additionally, a five-year follow-up study revealed that an estimated 72% of prisoners were rearrested within the same state they were previously discharged in. Identified demographics of those at a higher rate of recidivating are males, under age 40, white, and were released on community supervision (Durose et al., 2014).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) has an online data analysis tool that calculates the likelihood of recidivism rates of offenders. The tool defines recidivism as an arrest for a new crime following release. The BJS collects criminal history data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and state record repositories to study recidivism patterns of various offenders. This tool can assist criminal justice professionals in identifying the likelihood of an offender's recidivism rate. This tool serves as an early alert system for criminal justice professionals to

coordinate protective measures against recidivism (Snyder, Durose, Cooper, & Mulako-Wangota, 2016).

The Bureau Justice Statistic's repository of data, along with predictors of crime are tools to help solve the recidivism problem. In 1990, Andrews developed the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model of offender rehabilitation (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Andrews, Bonta, & Worsmith, 2006).

Risk-Need-Responsivity Model

The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model is an empirically driven approach that has contributed to establishing institutional classification systems and treatment intensity for offenders world-wide. The theoretical base to the RNR model is that criminal behavior can be predicted based upon identified criminogenic risk factors and that treatment needs should address those specific factors to reduce the likelihood of reoffending (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; King, Bresina, & Glenna, 2013). This approach is analogous to a medical model and treating a physical illness or condition to appropriate medical treatment.

The three core principles of the RNR model are designed to direct offender rehabilitation intensity with the goal of reducing an individual's likelihood of recidivating (Craig et al., 2013, p. 6). The *risk* principle matches the level of service to the offender's risk of re-offending; higher risk offenders will benefit from higher levels of intervention and treatment and lower risk offenders will benefit most from stabilization services such as, housing and transportation. The *need* principle refers to specific criminogenic needs and proposes interventions and treatments to specifically target them. Andrews and Bonta (1994 & 1998) identified through a meta-analysis the following factors: Antisocial attitudes, antisocial associates, antisocial temperament/ personality, history of diverse antisocial behavior, family/marital circumstances, social/work,

leisure/recreation, and substance use. King, Bresina, and Glenna (2013) categorized the factors into two categories, “big” and “lesser.” The Big Four criminogenic needs are (1) Anti-social cognition, (2) Anti-social companions, (3) Anti-social personality/temperament, and (4) Family and/or marital relations. The Lesser Four criminogenic needs are (1) Substance abuse, (2) Employment, (3) School, and (4) Leisure and/or recreation. The *responsivity* principle states that intervention and treatment programs should be matched to an offenders’ personal and inter-personal characteristics such as, learning style, motivation, abilities, and strengths. Research strongly suggests that effective programs include an appropriate match of intensity to an offender, employs a cognitive-behavioral approach, includes positive reinforcement, disseminates dosage to an individual’s risk levels, and includes a positivistic approach (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; King et al., 2013; Ward, Polascheck, & Beech 2006).

A fourth principle that interacts with the other three is professional discretion. This factor includes a professional’s ability to build rapport, interview, and interact, and allows for clinical judgement to override any of the other three principles of the theory (Craig et al., 2013, p. 6). Professional discretion is based upon staff training and skills. These may be natural traits or trained skills. One trained skill backed by research that validates effectiveness is motivational interviewing.

Positive psychology is based on the theory that human beings are predisposed to seek out experiences that make them feel good (Polaschek, 2012). Treatment approach’s that utilize a positive psychology framework include strengths-based, emotion-focused, cognition-focused, self-based, interpersonal, biological, and coping. Positive psychology relates to the RNR model because they both focus on optimizing positive traits.

The Trans Theoretical Model (TTM) uses the stages of change model to integrate processes and ideas across major psychology and behavioral theories (Glanz, Rimer, & Viswanath, 2008, p. 98). Prochaska and DiClemente (1982) identified ten processes of change in their research that were predictive of the successful discontinuation of smoking tobacco. The processes were later categorized into a series of six stages, also known as the "Stages of Change." The Stages of Change model's core constructs, in order of occurrence, include

1. Pre-contemplation: No intention to take action within the next six months. Lack of awareness that life can be enhanced by the behavioral change.
2. Contemplation: Intends to take action within the next six months. Recognition of the problem behavior and consideration of eliminating it.
3. Preparation: Intends to take action within the next 30 days and has taken some behavioral steps in the direction of the desired behavior. Reaffirmation of the need and desire to change problematic behavior.
4. Action: Changed overt behavior for less than six months. Implementation of the practices needed for successful behavior change.
5. Maintenance: Changed overt behavior for more than six months. Consistent use of new behaviors that were initiated in the action stage.
6. Termination/Relapse: No temptation to relapse and 100% confidence in behavior change. Original problem behavior no longer perceived as desirable

The Stages of Change model has over two decades of empirical support and has been applied to various fields of behavioral research including smoking cessation, exercise, stress management, medication adherence, bullying prevention, alcohol abuse, condom use, domestic violence offenders, and organ donation. Additionally, TTM and the stages of change model have been researched in a variety of settings and validated as a reliable methodology for behavioral interventions. This model is a promising approach for the intervention of criminogenic thinking.

The stages can be applied to criminogenic thinking and needs as an offender adopts prosocial attitudes and behaviors, for the voluntary release of previous problem errors (King et al., 2013).

The RNR model, positive psychology, and stages of change theory support the notion that “one size does not fit all” and is supportive for recidivism reduction re-entry initiatives. Evidence-Based practices in the criminal justice system include empirical supported interventions, such as the reviewed models coupled with trained and caring practitioners. Many factors account for why some previously incarcerated individuals succeed post-release and some do not, but lack of education and job skills are key reasons. Correctional education is the practice of academic and vocational educational activities within a correctional facility. Forms of correctional education in the 21st century include vocational programs, adult basic education, and post-secondary education. No post-secondary educational studies could be located that were published before 1980. Of state correctional institutions, 84% offer some type of education or training (Davis et al., 2013).

Vocational and occupational training programs are based on the needs of the inmates, general labor market conditions, and institution labor force needs. An important component is on-the-job training, which inmates receive through institution job assignments and work in Federal Prison Industries. The Bureau also facilitates post-secondary education in vocational and occupationally oriented areas. Some traditional college courses are available, but inmates are responsible for funding this coursework (Sams-Abiodun et al., 2017).

Davis and colleagues (2013) conducted a cost analysis estimating the costs of correctional education and of incarceration using a hypothetical sample of 100 inmates. They estimated the average annual cost of correctional education programs per inmate participant was between $1,400 and $1,744 (Davis et al., 2013). A three-year reincarceration costs study of only

the direct costs for those who did not receive correctional education was estimated to be between $8,700-$9,700 per participant. Davis et al. (2013) concluded, "The direct costs of providing correctional education are cost-effective compared with the direct costs of reincarceration" (p. ???). The three-year return on investment for taxpayers is nearly 400%, or $5 saved for every dollar spent (source, p. ??).

Benefits of Correctional Education

Brazzell et al. (2009) state the benefits of correctional education include a spectrum from prison safety, re-entry transition, and financial benefits. Projected savings of future criminal justice costs against the up-front costs of correctional programming are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Costs and Savings of Correctional Education

Costs of Programming	Savings in Future Criminal Justice Costs
Academic Education: $962	$5,306
Vocational Training: $1,182	$6,806

A goal of correctional educational program designers needs to ensure that both credit-bearing and vocational programs are reentry relevant, providing industry-relevant certifications, soft skills, and economic relevance in regard to the geographic area they are located. Effectiveness of programming for reentry is most beneficial when coordinated with area two-year institutions and employers. "Reentry relevant" programming is where trades, skills, and certifications will contribute to gainful employment upon release (Brazzell, 2009, p. 37).

Evidence-Based Programming

The movement to Evidence-Based Programming (EBP) in corrections began in 2012 in response to economic costs of correctional facilities (Schmalleger, 2015, p. 429). The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) states that evidence-based practices are the result of research and knowledge around correctional practices that can improve outcomes, such as reducing recidivism (National Institute of Corrections, 2013). Evidence-Based Programs are determined if the following four conditions are achieved: (1) Evaluation research shows that the program produces the expected positive results; (2) The results can be attributed to the program itself, rather than to other extraneous factors or events; (3) The evaluation is peer-reviewed by experts in the field; and (4) The program is endorsed by a federal agency or respected research organization and included in their list of effective programs (Cooney, Huser, Small, & O'Connor, 2007, p. 2).

Research on re-incarceration has identified risk and protective factors that contribute to post-release success and failure. Temple and Stuart (2009) identify six domains of risk and protective factors relevant to the social sciences: individual, family, peer, school, community, and society. The Office of the Surgeon General (2001) utilizes this empirical data to base substance abuse evidence-based curriculum for prevention, intervention, and treatment programs. The American Correctional Association also identifies risk and protective factors into six domains of individual, family, school, community, religion, and government. School/education is a commonality between these two entities. Although a number of factors influence successful reintegration into society, one common link between justice-involved individuals and re-incarceration statistics is identified in the school/education domain.

Summary

Education has been a component of correctional rehabilitation efforts since the mid-1800s and has focused on designing correctional programs that support the growth and development of incarcerated individuals. Education has been validated through research efforts as an area of needed attention for a justice-involved individual's successful reentry into society (National Reentry Resource Center, 2017).

The prevention of recidivism is a complex problem with no simple solutions. Risk and protective factor analysis offers a way to determine which justice-involved individuals are more likely to recidivate. This approach allows researchers and practitioners to tailor correctional educational programs and experiences, as well as reentry initiatives both at state and local levels to identify best practices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter Three provides an introduction to the epistemological roots of phenomenology, a summary of the proposed method, and the justification of the methodological selection. A detailed explanation of the study design is provided along with data analysis procedures, ethical implications, and a discussion of relevance to professional practice for educators.

The literature review on correctional education identified specific gaps related to qualitative inquiry regarding program availability, access, and institutional environmental variables. Additionally, substantial amounts of empirical research regarding the benefits of correctional education including inmate behavior, post-release success, and the economic return-on-investments was revealed though the literature review. I assessed gaps in the literature and decided to design this study to address them. I ventured into this research journey with no hypothesis. My intention was to listen to those who had lived correctional educational experiences.

This chapter provides a discussion and rationale for the selection of an exploratory phenomenological study. The philosophy regarding phenomenology research asserts that there are shared lived experiences among research participants and the overall essence can be identified and described (Creswell, 2009; Van Manen, 2016). This dissertation's focus was to obtain rich data regarding the identified phenomena of "correctional education," specifically regarding the benefits and challenges of it. Research goals were to contribute to the future design, implementation, and review processes of correctional education programs.

Additional topics in this chapter include the role of the researcher, data collection, and analysis methods. A basic research application was applied because the study was motivated by the researcher's intellectual interest in correctional education for the purpose of the extension of knowledge. Research findings are applicable to diverse audiences related to correctional education, such as adult learning, economics, and criminal justice reform.

Epistemological Assumption

This research study fundamentally asked, "What was it like to be a student in a correctional institution?" The intention of this study was to define a universal description of accessing and attending school as an inmate-student in an adult correctional facility. Interviews were selected as the appropriate technique for data collection because the data is only obtainable from those who experienced the research phenomena because it is impossible to replicate.

This study was guided by a social-constructionist epistemology rooted in post-modern thinking (Sexton, 1997). Postmodern thinking challenges the great narratives of western civilizations (Derrida, 1982). Crotty (1998) asserts constructivist frameworks allow truth and meaning to come into existence through our engagement with others as well as an opportunity for people to make sense of the same reality in different ways. This method will allow the researchers the ability to gather contextual data on the participants' experiences of their involvement in academic programs while in prison and offer rich descriptions of the phenomena (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013).

Positivism is a research intention that is based upon objectivity. Positivism asserts that knowledge is gained through observable and measurable facts (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). The basis includes knowledge about something that exists independent of the learner and that an absolute truth/reality exists. Research is focused on collecting measurable data to validate or

invalidate research claims. The natural sciences of physics, chemistry, and biology tend to apply positivism and quantitative research methods because they are purely objective.

Constructivism assumes that no single reality exists for anything and that knowledge is constructed by the learner through the meaning-making processes. A constructivist epistemology includes a subjective interpretation of lived experiences, which is what makes it different from positivist research (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). The goal of a constructivist design framework is to learn about participant's lived experiences through research inquiry and analyze the data until saturation is identified.

Phenomenology

A researcher's process on identifying the correct methodology is essential for an effective study: "The adequacy of a research method depends on the purpose of the research and the questions being asked" (Seidman, 2013, p. ??). A qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design was selected for this dissertation because its goals include studying lived experiences to define a universal understanding of attending school in prison (Creswell, 2009; Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013; Hays & Wood, 2011).

Qualitative research creates a complex holistic picture through word analysis that produces a richly descriptive product. Data are derived through detailed testimony from participants who experienced the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 326). The research process is inductive, and the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009, pp. 5, 14).

The goals of phenomenological research are to study the transitory nature of a lived experience and interpret how people made meaning of it and ultimately define a universal essence through data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018 & Seidman, 2013). A phenomenological

study identifies participants who have experienced the phenomenon under study and data are collected from them (Rudestam & Newton, 2014).

Phenomenological research studies need to have a representative sample of a larger population to generate knowledge (Patton, 2002). This process begins with designing meticulous research questions created from gaps found during the literature review. Interview questions have a constructivist paradigm that focuses on participants, while paying attention to the subjective nature of the meaning-making experience of correctional education.

Phenomenology was presented by Husserl (1983) in the early twentieth century as a major orientation to the social sciences. Edmund Husserl is cited as the Father of Phenomenology throughout qualitative research literature. Husserlian theory asserts that experiences under study are referred to as "phenomena" and should include perception, thought, memory, and imagination (Merriam, 2009, p. 9). Intentionality is a major component in Husserlian theory and means two things simultaneously: Consciousness is actionable and referential. Intentionality is always about referencing one thing to another (Husserl, 1983). Phenomenological researchers use intentionality prior, during, and after active research. This is also referred to as "noesis and noema" (Husserl, 1983).

Husserl introduced the "Lifeworld" concept in 1936 as a shift in the phenomenology project to include the social and interpersonal spheres to studying a phenomenon. The lifeworld concept caused social science researchers to consider examining the totality of a phenomenological study, rather than an individual's experience. Husserlian theory concludes that a lived experience (phenomena) can be revisited through research inquiry and define a universal description. The classical Greek word *eidos* (essence) is used in Husserlian literature to define

the features of a lived experience that are both necessary and invariant to phenomenological research.

A researcher is the primary instrument of data collection in qualitative research and must actively reflect on personal assumptions and biases in order to have an awareness of how they may shape the study (Creswell, 2009, p. 182). Information about the researcher should be included in the study's final report to demonstrate their acknowledgement about the research inquiry (Patton, 2002, p. 566). Acknowledging personal experiences, passions, and interests contributes towards the study's integrity. This is referenced as *epoche,* or phenomenological reduction, throughout the literature.

Different ways a researcher can consciously discover and process their interest to the research inquiry include types of bracketing exercises, writing in a memo-ing journal, and phenomenological reduction (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 314; Husserl, 1983). All bracketing techniques share the common goal of exposing the researcher's personal and cultural values regarding the research inquiry. The purpose is to increase the rigor of the project, protect the researcher from unintended effects of possible emotionally triggering information, and enhancing the research process to facilitate more robust analysis and results (Ashworth, 1999; Rolls & Relf, 2006).

Bracketing originated from Husserlian theory and phenomenology. Husserl (1983) defined bracketing as activities that raise awareness of the researcher's personal beliefs, attitudes, and experiences regarding the research inquiry and is the first step in an interpretive framework. Husserl asserted that bracketing was a necessary part in the qualitative research process in order to understand the phenomenon under study as purely as one can to conduct ethical and responsible research. Husserl affiliated bracketing with the Greek word *epoche,* which means to

refrain and temporarily set aside judgement (Husserl, 1983). Husserlian theory asserts that a researcher can obtain their natural attitude regarding an inquiry through phenomenological *epoche*.

Martin Heidegger was a German philosopher and student of Edmund Husserl. Heidegger rejected Husserl's bracketing concept claiming that conscious reduction of preconceptions was not possible or desirable. The Heideggerian bracketing perspective includes reflection of personal experiences and illuminating meaning. The differentiating component when compared to Husserlian theory is that pure reduction is unobtainable because a researcher has conscious knowledge from experiences (Gadamer, 2008).

Merleau-Ponty supported Heidegger's philosophical position on bracketing. He supported bracketing as an integral part of conducting responsible research with the goal for the researcher to temporarily set aside identified preconceptions to reveal the lived experience of the research participants (Ashworth, 1999).

Bracketing is a process of self-discovery and not a single occurrence during a study (Tufford & Newman, 2016, p. 84). Bracketing is done to increase a projects' rigor, protect the researcher from unintended effects of possible emotionally triggering information, and enhance the research process, which facilitates more robust analysis and results (Ashworth, 1999, Rolls & Reif, 2006). Three popular bracketing methods include memo writing, interviewing, and reflective journaling (Ahern, 1999; Glaser, 1998; Rolls & Reif, 2006). I committed to these three bracketing methods to assert the validity of my study.

Memo writing includes the three components of free-thinking, writing, and processing the study's foundational theory, methods, procedures, and observations. Utilizing memo writing as a bracketing technique allows the researcher to explore raw data and address emotional

awareness about their study (Glaser, 1998). I maintained a memo journal utilizing the following prompts: (1) Today I coded, (2) What's their story? (3) Improving the procedure, and (4) other notes. I found this strategy helpful because I was able to process my thoughts into my next action steps.

A bracketing partner is someone whom the researcher engages in an interview with to identify preconceptions and biases about the research inquiry (Rolls & Reif, 2006). Bracketing interviews can be conducted at any phase of the research study and are designed to uncover themes pertinent to the study and explore the researcher's emotional connectedness to the inquiry. Interviews may offer additional insight and raise awareness of preconceived notions that can be managed during the research process.

Reflective journaling can be conducted at any phase of a research study. It differs from memo writing because it solely includes identifying personal connections to the research study. Topics for exploration may include identifying assumptions regarding participant's demographics, the researcher's role in the research hierarchy, potential role conflicts with participants, and personal values (Ahern, 1999; Hanson, 1994). Reflective journaling helped me explore my own personal and professional experiences, viewpoints, and assumptions regarding social justice and correctional education.

My bracketing exercises for this study included eidetic reduction, memo journaling, bracketing conversations, and reflexive journaling. Bracketing prompts included personal learning experiences, assumptions, and viewpoints. These processes allowed me to acknowledge my passion for social justice and education. I concluded two sensitizing concepts of intrigue and frustration regarding correctional education in the United States. The research questions and methodology were developed based upon these findings.

Methodological Justification

Qualitative research includes several different design methods in which the researcher is the main instrument in data collection (Denzin et al., 2017; Seidman, 2013, pp. 8, 26). A phenomenological approach can include in-depth interviews between participants and the researcher. This design is appropriate when the research inquiry seeks defensible knowledge claims regarding lived experiences. A well-conducted interview can result in highly desired information-rich data (Airasian, Gay, & Mills, 2015).

According to Dexter (2006), "Interviews are a conversation with a purpose" (p. 136). Interviews with those who carry out the processes and/or comprise the organization are the preferred method in researching an educational process, organization, or institution (Ferrarotti, 1981). The heart to interviewing as a mode of data collection in a research study is when the researcher genuinely cares about participants and their stories (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2013, p. 111).

Ginsberg & Sinacore (2013) assert that development of the initial interview questions serves as a form of bracketing that identifies the researcher's subjective framework. Initial provisional research questions were carefully crafted to address correctional education experiences relevant to access, availability, and program characteristics. Secondary research questions focused on interview participant's prior and post-incarceration educational experiences (see Appendix C). Questions were open-ended and addressed gaps from the literature review. The questions were designed to provide a deeper understanding of participants lived experiences.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling, also referenced as criterion-based sampling, was the primary method used to recruit participants for this phenomenological study (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Participants

selected had lived experiences regarding the research interest of correctional education. The number of participants used in phenomenology varies by the research inquiry. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009) suggest between three and six participants. The number of participants for this study was determined based upon the information they shared about the research inquiry, rather than a quantitative representative sample. Being a qualitative study, it was important to have the study sample provide valuable information about the research inquiry. I conducted a pilot interview and seven interviews for the study. I recognized emergent constructs during data analysis and determined that saturation had occurred with seven participants. Blumer (1969) indicates that a small sample of participants discussing a phenomenon under study is more valuable than a representative sample.

Snowball, chain, or network sampling occurs when a few key participants are identified, and they refer others for the study. This method is highly desirable for phenomenological studies (Merriam, 2009, pp. 49, 79). Snowballing occurred in this study from participants and non-participants who shared the recruitment flyer with individuals they believed met eligibility criteria. Interested participants contacted me and I proceeded with determining eligibility.

When recruiting participants for a phenomenology research study, it is important to be intentional in the participant selection process to ensure the participants have direct and adequate experience with the phenomenon being studied (Flynn, Duncan, & Jorgensen, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011). I created a recruitment flyer, and it was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Ferris State University (see Appendix D). I identified locations where the research population would likely see the flyer, then made contact with appropriate individuals to receive permission to post them. This process took over a year and included time-extensive phone calls, emails, and personal meetings. I received verbal and/or written permission to post

recruitment flyers from the regional technical college, two homeless shelters in neighboring counties, local churches, non-profit agencies, a bowling alley, a laundromat, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Identifying Participants and Pilot Testing

Based on the recruiter methods above, participants for the study were all over 18 years of age, experienced correctional education in an adult facility, and were not currently under correctional supervision. Eligibility questions included verification of age 18 or older, not under correctional supervision, and participation in education in an adult correctional facility. Additionally, we discussed their experiences and interest in volunteering for the study. I reviewed the Informed Consent (see Appendix B) with each participant and asked questions to assess their verbal responses to determine an understanding of the study. I answered their questions and discussed scheduling the interview.

I determined two individuals were ineligible, and two never followed up with me. One individual had not been to prison, but instead a jail. The other was not able to communicate a basic understanding of the study. I conducted a pilot study to test the interview questionnaire and research methodology. I debriefed the pilot study with the committee. No adaptations to the research questions were identified.

The sample set included seven participants who had been incarcerated in the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC). Additionally, one participant had served time in a federal institution. This number of participants is consistent with other phenomenological studies and recommendations for phenomenological qualitative research (Flynn et al., 2012; Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013; Hays & Wood, 2011; Polkinghorne, 1989).

At the time of the interview, the average participant age was 49 years. Six males and one female were interviewed. The average interview time was 91 minutes. Three participants had an earned General Education Diploma (GED), two participants earned a high school diploma, and one participant had not earned a high school credential. One participant had an earned college credit certificate in manufacturing. Another participant had earned 30 college credits and not a higher educational credential. The pilot interview participant had an earned bachelor's degree and was currently enrolled in graduate studies in ministry. The study group consisted of diverse perspectives based on race, institutional security level, and incarcerated time periods. A detailed demographic description to include educational history can be found in Tables 3 and 4. All participant stories are reflections of their lived experiences and do not represent the views of the South Carolina Department of Corrections.

Seidman (2009) explains two criteria for the number of participants for a phenomenological study (p. 58). The first criterion is sufficiency, which is the number of participants that make up the population, so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experiences of those in the study. The second criterion is saturation of information, which is the point during a study when the interviewer begins to hear the same information reported (Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). I achieved these criteria through the data analysis process. One process that asserted I met the criteria included interview transcription. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. This allowed me to become very familiar with responses and identify emerging themes. It also allowed for me to self-assess my interviewing skills and the process.

Table 3
Participant Demographics

	Length of Interview (Minutes)	Gender	Age	Race	Hispanic or Latino	Ever had an IEP or 504 Plan	Current Employment Status
1	70	M	51-60	White	No	No	FT
2	33	M	51-60	White	No	No	Disabled
3	50	M	18-25	Black	No	No	Seeking
4	23	F	41-50	Black	No	No	PT
5	60	M	31-40	White	No	No	Seeking
6	60	M	41-50	White	No	No	FT
7	90	M	51-60	White	No	No	FT

Table 4
Participant Educational History

	Highest Level of Education	Mother's Highest Level of Education	Father's Highest Level of Education
1	GED	Prefer not to answer	Graduate
2	GED	Prefer not to answer	Prefer not to answer
3	College credit Certificate	High School Diploma	High School Diploma
4	N/A	High School Diploma	High School Diploma
5	High School Diploma	Undergraduate	Undergraduate
6	High School Diploma	High School Diploma	HSD
7	GED	GED	N/A

Interviewing

The purpose for in-depth interviewing as a phenomenological method is to explore an understanding of lived experiences and the meanings associated with the experience (Seidman, 2013, p. 9). Interviewees are referenced as participants in this study because it indicates active involvement between them and the researcher (Seidman, 2013, p. 111). The interview goal of

this study included participant's reconstruction of their lived experiences attending school as an inmate student.

Participants were encouraged to "reconstruct," not "remember" their experiences. Interviews as a data collection method are conversational in nature and remain focused on the research questions to allow for interpretive inquiry (Charmaz, 2006). Additionally, Charmaz (2006) asserts that interviews are likely to be influenced by environmental conditions and the interviewer is responsible for keeping the interview focused on the research inquiries.

Seidman (2013) asserts that human interaction may distort the participant's reconstruction and reflection of events. Interviewing as a data collection method must include strategies by the researcher to minimize distortion (pp. 26-31). Gay and Airasian (2003) find that participant's responses may be affected by their impression of the interviewer (p. 291). The interviewer's skills and natural abilities are paramount to establishing rapport and conducting an ethical interview that respects participant's rights and the research questions with fidelity.

I selected interviewing as the data collection method for this study because the research inquiry was based on lived experiences that could not be replicated. Interview questions were semi-structured to allow for flexibility and open-ended responses (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 291) (see Appendix C). Interviews included the interviewer and participant.

Interviews are about relationships, clear definitions, and an understanding of each person's role in the research project. This was articulated both in writing (Informed Consent form) and verbally. My main task was to build upon and explore participant's responses to the research questions. Seidman (2013) asserts the interview process can achieve a subjective point of view for the researcher of the experience (pp. 9, 17).

There is no single interviewing method. The governing principle of the research design goal is to strive for a repeatable and documentable rational process (Seidman, 2013, p. 25). Interviewing as a data collection method affirms the importance of individual's stories. It allows people the ability to make meaning through language. It is also deeply satisfying to researchers who are interested in others' stories (Seidman, 2013, p. 13).

Seidman (2009) outlines general interviewing etiquette for phenomenological interviews that includes: Listen more, talk less, don't interrupt, use the participant's language/slang, ask for clarification at appropriate times, avoid leading questions, and ask open-ended questions (p. 87). Additionally, active listening, building rapport, having a conscious respect towards the participant, and being aware of one's personal ego all contribute to the interview (p. 81).

I have been trained in forensic interviewing and behavioral-based interviewing. Both methods include active listening components, which are critical to conducting in-depth interviews as a research method (Seidman, 2009, p. 92). Active listening may be demonstrated through effective and non-invasive strategies such as repeating participant's comments appropriately at later times, appropriate body language, eye contact, and personal space.

During the interview when a participant reflects and reconstructs their lived experience, this is called the "act of attention" (Seidman, 2013, pp. 18-19). This activity allows the participant to draw upon and consider meanings of their lived experiences. This is referenced as the meaning-making process throughout phenomenological literature. Interviewing is a human process that relies heavily on language (Seidman, 2013, p. 18).

Data Management

Confidentiality was secured starting at the first point of contact with a participant by assigning a code of random numbers and letters. I researched and selected cloud-based vendors

with secure servers for transcription services and qualitative data analysis. I received approval from my committee before using identified vendors. I utilized Temi for transcription services and Dedoose for qualitative data analysis.

I understood that the population had been previously incarcerated, so I ensured they were not considered a vulnerable population at the time of the interview by reviewing eligibility criteria. Each participant acknowledged they were not currently incarcerated or under supervision and signed the informed consent form.

Temi's transcription services provided a secure file transfer and cloud server. I securely downloaded each transcript onto my password-protected computer and then deleted it from Temi's secure server as an additional safeguard. I reviewed each transcript against its audio recording for accuracy and altered confidential information to be anonymous such as locations, family and friend's names, facility names, and any other potential identifying information. I reviewed each transcript twice before uploading the file to a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software called Dedoose.

Paper copies of participants' signed informed consent forms are secured in a locked file cabinet in my home to which only I have the combination. Documents will be securely maintained for a period of no more than three years after the study per IRB regulations.

Data Analysis

Coding was the central part of the research since a hypothesis was not being tested in this study. I remained focused on the research questions during the coding process by posting written notes where I could see them. My bracketing activities allowed me to set aside personal biases and view participants as autonomous individuals. I coded using in vivo, the participant's actual words (Manning, 2017). This allowed for the data to be as close to participant's language as

possible and exclude my interpretations. I used a variety of interpretive techniques to describe, decode, translate, and understand the overall meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). I remained cognizant not to make conceptual assumptions during initial coding.

Successful analysis included accurate notes, datasets, and processing (Smith et al. 2009, p. 52). I maintained accurate handwritten notes, exported files from Dedoose after coding sessions, created Excel spreadsheets, among other visual aids to diversify my analysis. Analysis continued until no new themes emerged from the data. I read all the data and listened to each interview audio multiple times to gain an understanding of what participants said as well as the nature of their comments.

Coding

The research questions remained a priority during all phases of coding. My phenomenological stance was always at the forefront of keeping codes pure to their essence. My bracketing activities allowed me to set aside personal assumptions and perceptions. Dedoose software's coding features allowed me to read in real time the codes co-occurrence, write memos, and concurrently analyze.

Initial coding.

Once I gained a holistic understanding of each participant's interview, I began the initial coding process by examining each line of a transcript in Dedoose and on paper simultaneously. I broke down the data by highlighting salient codes. I used the research questions as a guide and coded events, significant experiences, emotions, frequency, and time period related statements (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). I reviewed 159 pages of transcripts and identified 612 codes during open coding. Codes that resulted from this cycle represented the smallest unit of data and were the child codes.

Focused coding.

I organized the child codes from initial coding into groups of categories, called parent codes, before processing and affiliating meaning to them (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). I used the qualitative analysis features in Dedoose and handwritten notes to continuously conceptualize and sort the data. I processed the initial codes and categories as they related to the research questions and gaps identified from the literature review. I made connections between salient codes and categories, which helped refine them into condensed groups for more detailed analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

Axial coding.

I began working with the disaggregated data by relating it together among categories and subcategories. Further analysis offered clarity among the codes and allowed for merging of categories. I merged all the grandchildren codes into child and parent codes. I identified thematic categories into hierarchies and sub-themes (Stirling, 2001). I concluded axial coding with a total of five parent codes and eleven child codes.

Memo-ing

I debriefed with the dissertation committee regularly during data collection and analysis phases. This allowed opportunities to identify and bracket biases and remain subjective. Among the numerous biases disclosed and identified, I discussed my life-long passion for social justice topics as a major driving force for the study. A committee member acknowledged the impact race and socioeconomics have on this phenomenon and the collateral consequences of incarceration. One theme that surfaced during bracketing conversations was team members assertions about how systemic racism has impacted the academic programming in prisons.

Ethical Implications

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was secured before recruitment occurred. Foreseeable risks and benefits associated with this study were minimal and participation was voluntary. I complied with the three basic ethical principles with research involving human beings as established in the Belmont Report (1979): Respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Seidman, 2013, p. 60-61).

I made an effort to protect identities starting at the first point of contact by assigning codes that did not correlate with the participant. I stored codes in a locked file in my residence separate from the list of actual names and informed consent forms. Each interview participant acknowledged the study's purpose, their rights as an interviewee, and confidentiality by signing the informed consent form. Each participant agreed for their interview to be audio recorded and transcribed.

Schutz (1970) and Van Manen (2016) state that it is the responsibility of the researcher to be trained in appropriate and ethical interviewing techniques to support the participant to verbalize their memories for the purpose of the research goals. I successfully completed the CITI Program's Research Ethics and Compliance Training. I have also been trained in forensic, behavioral-based, and situational-based interviewing skills for my careers over the past 18 years. I have always received high ratings on professional evaluations regarding interpersonal communication skills. I selected interviewing as a method for data collection because interpersonal communication is a natural strength and I have been professionally trained in it.

Summary

The research results elucidate the phenomena of correctional education from the vantage point of an incarcerated student. The rich information obtained from in-depth interviews allows

various disciplines to utilize the findings. This work attempts to create a voice that speaks to the urgency for best practice educational programming within prison walls.

In this chapter, I described the rationale for choosing phenomenology as a method and described it. I also described my bracketing exercises I utilized to prevent my own experiences from influencing the data. I summarize the data and offer rich descriptions supported with interview excerpts in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 4: DATA RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The research significance of this study is focused on education as a key factor for successful re-entry to society from incarceration (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011; Winterfield, 2009). Educational programs are defined in this study as the General Education Diploma (GED) and post-secondary credentials. The primary research questions for this study focuson on characteristics of correctional education such as availability, ease of access, and available resources. Secondary research questions focused on educational experiences before and after incarceration.

The majority of current literature has been authored by correctional professionals or academics, while very few articles are written by incarcerated individuals. The purpose of this study was to uncover what it was like to experience school in a correctional environment. As one of the few qualitative studies on this topic, this phenomenological study uncovered specific characteristics about correctional education from the perspective of previously incarcerated individuals. This study obtained data from one-on-one semi-structured interviews with seven participants who experienced the research phenomena under investigation.

Data analysis included three types of coding: descriptive, in vivo, and emotion. I coded interview transcripts on paper, electronically in Dedoose, and listened to the audio. This process was cyclical and maximized my retention, processing, and analyzation. My following actions included organizing codes into categories in which I titled as parent and child codes. Further conceptualization identified emergent themes and categories. This methodological approach

sought to understand meanings attributed to the perception of correctional education from the perspective as an inmate-student. I made an effort to imagine myself in the data to allow for clarity of the research purpose. I remained focused on the research questions by having them visually present on notecards during analysis to remain true to the fidelity of the research purpose.

In this chapter, the findings are presented as descriptive and are centered on emergent themes. Participants' quotes illustrate themes and categories that give sound to the silent voice of an incarcerated student. I implemented a separate coding system to further protect participants' identities that indicates P1 through P7 for each individual. The terms used in this analysis include codes, categories, themes, and excerpts. Emergent themes are the largest categories and include categories to support them. Interview excerpts are included to illustrate and support the findings.

Data Overview

During the initial open-coding process, I identified 612 codes. Final data analysis concluded five emergent themes and seven categories. Table 5 illustrates themes and categories in a timeline format indicative of pre-incarceration, during-incarceration, and post-incarceration.

I maintained memos during data analysis that included my conceptualization of merging and naming emergent themes and categories. I exported Excel spreadsheets that included the codes after each data analysis session to support validity. Qualitative data analysis functions in Dedoose offered visual representations of code co-occurrences, applications, and presence. These robust functions supplied me with the tools to process emergent themes factually and objectively. The preceding sections provide detailed descriptions with participant quotes and analysis that elucidate themes and categories.

Table 5
Emergent Themes and Categories

PERSPECTIVE: INCARCERATED ADULTS CONTEXT: STATE-OPERATED ADULT CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES	
THEME	CATEGORIES
1. I was Raised to be Good	• Influential People Before Prison • I Messed with Dope
2. School Before Prison	
3. There's Not A Lot to do in Prison	• Influential People in Prison • Non-Educational Programs in Prison • Prison is a Dangerous Place
4. School Behind the Fence	• Educational Resources & Staff in Prison
5. I got out of Prison, so now what?	• School After Prison

Theme #1: I was Raised to be Good

The theme "I was Raised to be Good" was unveiled through participants disclosures about their upbringing and family values.

> I was raised to be good; you know. It just didn't happen that way. (P6)

All participants expressed similar comments about their nuclear family's protective and risk factors related to their pre-incarceration home environment and education.

> I was a pretty good guy. But I never would have, if you called a criminal good guy. You know what I mean? (P6).

Additionally, participants expressed their identity being affiliated to past criminal behaviors as negative despite having left incarceration years ago. "I was Raised to be Good" is an important theme to this study because it offers insight into participant's current sense of self to include a past identity of being an inmate.

> There was always love there (P5).

This participant statement was reflective of every interview in so many words. Participant 5 shared that his parents consistently provided basic needs such as food, shelter, and a sense of

safety. P5 explained that he knew love was always there because the family shared household responsibilities and respected each other.

Every participant revealed memories that align with pro-social values and feeling loved by their parents/family. This theme and the category “Influential People before Prison” had the most code co-occurrences. Influential people included the most codes about their mother, then peers, and father. Categories that were merged into this theme included economics, attitudinal, and criminal justice system involvement. These merged categories made clear how participants defined what a good upbringing meant to them. These data proclaimed that parents and peers were heavily weighted influences in participant’s lives as noted in these statements.

> My mom said if I took all my good qualities and had put them forth, if I had strived as much to do the things that I did bad to do them good, I would have achieved a whole lot more in my life. The lifestyle was what caught me up. It was fun, I’m not lying there was a lot of good times. When the party ended, it wasn't fun (P2).

> I was just hardheaded and messed with the wrong people, you know, all this. I just wanted to hang around people older than me (P6).

> I kinda had a close-knit circle. I was only friends with a few people and um, I guess I'm still the same way now. I don't really have that many friends. Most people get on my nerves (P7).

Participants described how tangible items such as clothing and vehicles shaped their interpretation of a good upbringing. An original category titled economics was merged into this theme because it conveyed participants understanding of the relationship between having been provided material items and parental love. “We had everything” and “I had good Christmas, you know. My momma did something” (P6). This participant described having both non-essential and essential material items contributed to having a good childhood.

Socio-economic status was a component in this theme and manifested through findings that define household income. The relevance to having a good upbringing included that participants basic needs were not neglected.

> I come from an influential family… Was later driving a corvette, and then had no interest in school. (P3)

> We grew up poor, so whatever I wanted— clothes, I had to buy myself. I cut grass and had a paper route. Kids would make fun of me and stuff. (P5)

Socio-economic statements were important variables to this theme and concluded that actual status was irrelevant. Basic needs being met and feeling loved were components to how participants interpreted being raised "good."

Criminal justice system involvement and attitudinal variables were merged into this theme and included findings for pre-incarceration as an adult. Each participant discussed their criminal conduct and thinking as well as how they knew in the "back of my head" (P3) that their parents would not approve. On the contrary, poor decision-making statements included affiliating with the "wrong people" (P6) and a "bad crowd" (P4), which are included with the category, "Influential People before Prison." Attitudinal comments were initially coded as positive or negative and later interpreted with the mindset psychological traits of growth (positive) or victim (negative) (Dweck, 2017).

> I had a bad attitude. I wanted to learn, but I said I wanted to teach myself. (P2)

> Then I got into the juvenile facility probably when I was around 10-11 years old. I was taken away from my mother, I was an uncontrollable child. In there they make you go to school. Which, like I said I had some teachers that were cool with me there. They taught me, I took it in. Did a lot of reading, a lot of writing. (P2)

Conceptualization among merged categories into the theme "I was Raised to be Good" concluded that the nuclear family was most influential during childhood and adolescent years. The findings reveal evidence that support Chickering and Reisser (1993) identity theory and Eric Erickson's (1963) psycho-social development theory.

Category: Influential people before prison.

Participants frequently talked about people in their lives who had a significant impact pre-incarceration. The most recurring mention was about their mother in a positive tone that insinuated a caring presence.

> She [mom] wanted us to do good, but she working as a single parent. My mom worked all the time. By the time she got home, she wasn't the one that like checked our homework. (P5)

> She [mom] took my word for it. Yeah, she was trusting, a little too trusting and I took advantage of that. (P7)

Participants expressed through these examples that their mother was a stable parental figure in the home. Mention of fathers by participants were either minimal or included past traumatic events such as,

> We lived in a broken, broken home. My dad was an alcoholic, with me living in that environment. My mom didn't drink. (P5)

> My father was murdered when I was 7. (P2)

The perception expressed by every participant was that parental involvement was an important piece of their past and present. Participants descried the characteristics of influential people (adults) that left a positive impression. Recurring data included helpful, caring, and nice. In addition, the messages being sent by these individuals asseverated the importance of education.

> I came here (local community center) as a kid. She (staff member) would always tell us, the neighborhood kids, how important education is. (P4)

> They (parents) always told me, you're going to need an education to make it in this world, to survive. You know, you're going to need an education and get a job, support yourself. You're going to want to do things like that. They were telling me this my whole life, but it's like I didn't listen until life happened to me. Cause that was the kind of person I was (pause) too hard-headed to listen when I was being told. So, life had to be my teacher. (P4)

> I had three really good teachers that treated everyone fairly. (P5)

> Taking the time to really explain things and not just saying this is wrong, like explaining to you why it was wrong and what you could do better. Like those teachers just this is wrong, do better next time. You know what I mean? Like, she would really take the time. (P7)

Contrary to positive influences, participants acknowledged the negative influence their peer group had on their pre-incarceration life. Participants frequently stated they now have an awareness of the peer influence that contributed to their criminal thinking and conduct as evidenced in these findings:

> I had a couple friends who, you know, on honor rolls and in a sports and doing the right thing. You know, they were telling me stuff like, why are you hanging with those guys? Hang with us, you know, but I didn't listen to him. I didn't want to hang with them. (P4)

> Hanging around a bad crowd. It was just you started doing more mischievous stuff and I wasn't taking it serious. And I ended up robbing someone when I was 17. And um, I ended up, they ended up arresting me, come into school and arrested me. (P4)

> I had two cousins and they got them on a kingpin statue. You know, they were millionaires, and you know, it's all you ever did was heard of their name and I thought I would bypass them, and you know I never did could never put a dent in them. That was my stupid dream. (P6)

This participant disclosed examples that support their opinion that education is valuable as well as their current opinion of themselves.

> I went from 11th grade (not completing high school) and I ended up getting married at 19. We was together for 13 years — married for 10. So, out of those 10 I never worked, took care of me, my ex (husband). (P1)

> A lot (emphasized). That's why I want my babies to get their education. I don't want my kids to be like me — lost. My thoughts to me — I used to say, if I would finished school would I be like this? (P1)

This section provided participant insight into their pre-incarceration lives and the impact from different relationships. Similar responses acknowledged the importance of positive adult and parental relationships and the messages regarding education contribute to success. Peer relationships were heavily weighted influences during adolescent years and mostly a negative influence in this study.

This brought to light the opinion that education is an important factor to a pro-social lifestyle. “Influential People Before Prison” is a category within the theme “I was Raised to be Good” and provided examples of the phenomenon that demonstrate the critical importance of having basic needs met and healthy relationships during childhood. Contributing factors that participants voiced about their current non-criminal lifestyle cite lessons learned before their criminal behaviors began. As P3 stated, “in the back of my head” they knew their criminal behaviors were wrong. This positive message was delivered by an influential person.

Category: I messed with dope.

All but one participant disclosed a substance abuse history. The code presence function in Dedoose validated this finding. Concurrent with the category “Influential people before prison” includes a recurring theme of substance abuse. Participants verbalized a connectedness between their substance abuse history, peers, and criminal behavior.

> I kind of dabbled smoking pot and I sort of something and I guess when I was like 15. Every once in a while. Just every once-in-a-while when I got a wild hair up my ass. (P7)

Participants made clear their substance abuse history included change in priorities, interrupted jobs, and hindered relationships:

> I was either going to be fired or I resigned due to my opioid addiction. I did resign. (P5.

Another participant described loss of employment this way:

> Something happened because of my addiction [terminated from employment]. (P2)

These statements acknowledge that their priorities shifted and high-risk decision making occurred due to substance abuse. Participants also noted that their peer groups swayed during this period in their life to include individuals who were using substances.

> I had my first taste of freedom; you know what I mean? I've getting out of a structured environment, my house. And when I got out and could do whatever the hell I wanted to do, yeah. It was not, not to take anything seriously except getting wasted. (P7)

Participants described components in their lives of using substances as having low motivation and being “Hard-headed. Messing with dope and selling dope for about 10 years then the law got on me” (P6). Another participant revealed that, “After that (sports injury) I started smoking pot all the time. And it just kind of, you know, I went from being in horrible shape in a matter of a month or two, just kind of didn't care about anything. I lost my motivation” (age 18) (P7).

The connection between substance abuse and criminal behavior appeared concurrently with the six participants who disclosed. The spectrum of substance abuse includes use, misuse, abuse, and addiction (SAMSHA, 2016).

Theme #2: School before Prison

Participants were asked about their school experiences prior to incarceration. Responses were categorized into positive and negative experiences, teacher characteristics, and attitudinal-related statements. Positive statements superseded negative ones as represented in the number of applied codes in Dedoose. Most participants’ comments were similar to this one by P7, “I wish I would've taken it more seriously than I did” (P7).

Another participant described it this way,

> Growing up in school, I never took it serious. I was more of a student that will act up in school, get in trouble or trying to be the class clown and whatnot. (P4)

The overall tone in participants’ responses was that education contributed to career and life stability. This was validated in the data with the category “Influential People before Prison” as made clear in the data code co-occurrences and high number of applications. This participant shared their experience about helpfulness and caring being examples of teacher characteristics that had a positive lasting impression.

> Every time I had a question, you know, they were always willing to help anytime, anytime, you know. If I asked for extra things that if it could help me learn, they did it. You know, with no hesitation. So, you know, I kinda noticed that, you know, if these people want me to do well, I mean I kind of felt like I don't want to be a disappointment to them and let ‘em down (P4).

Most participants described their middle school years as performing lower academically, having less motivation, and encountering a major life event. Descriptions by participants were verbally illustrated with details. They all conveyed a self-perception of academic capability and attributed age/maturity and external variables to their negative educational experiences. The following three participants revealed these memories.

> When I got to school in sixth grade was when I lashed out. I took it out on teachers. I wasn’t a bully, but I took it out on teachers. And they were the ones trying to help me. (P2)

> I know, actually was in the sixth grade twice. I didn't have the credentials, so they kept me back because, so many missed days. I was skipping school and was suspended. My head just wasn't in the right place. (P4)

> I was a decent student. Like up until probably middle school, I got straight A's. Like, school was really easy to me and I didn't have to try it. And then once I got to middle school, and you kinda got to give a little bit of effort, that's what I kinda, I guess started getting Bs and Cs. And then high school I picked back up. (P7)

P5 acknowledged that their attention was focused on girls and sports during middle school, in which contributed to their negative experiences.

> I was suspended a couple of times for fighting and stuff a couple of times. I never got expelled from school. I would say it was okay. You know I wasn't like the class clown or nothing. My main focus was on girls mainly a lot, but just to be honest. And I played football, I played sports. (P5)

Out of the seven participants interviewed two graduated from public high school on time, one never earned a high school credential, and four earned their GED while incarcerated. Participants spoke about correctional education program availability, access, and characteristics. Educational programs discussed were GED and credit bearing college courses. The four participants who did not complete high school shared their departure as follows:

> I dropped out of high school. (P3)
>
> I never got the chance to finish because of that (getting arrested). It wasn't because I dropped out. Cause I didn't like school. Because I was arrested. (P4)
>
> I quit in 11th grade. I just didn't like it there in high school. But I did, but I didn't, you know. I wished I'd have that to go over again. I got my GED in prison. (P6)
>
> I was a high school dropout. I finished the 11th grade. I didn't go back my 12th grade year 'cause I was always bullied in school and fighting. (P1)

The emphatic theme regarding dropping out of high school was regret and voiced by all participants. The participants who earned their GED in prison articulated the academic achievement as a positive life milestone. P1 was not able to complete their GED in prison and described the school experience as overall humbling, "Made me feel some sort of way. The bell ringing" (P1). This participant reminisced about enjoying the structure of school growing up, specifically the bell ringing. The audio bell ring triggered P1 into a pleasant feeling. They were able to attribute this feeling to a sense of security and transfer it within the correctional environment.

Participants verbalized feelings of dissatisfaction of being undecided with an academic plan. This study considered self-efficacy a dependent variable to academic performance. This section depicts participants' perceptions of uncertainty and the relationship with academic performance.

> I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I was undecided. I wasn't good at like standardized testing and all that. I never really been good at that. I've always been good at hands on. (P5)

This participant described their feelings of uncertainty in conjunction with parental expectations:

> Graduating high school the same way it was expected of me. It (college) wasn't really something I was interested in. I guess I did it just because it was expected to do. And that was really about the only reason I had for doing it. I had no idea what I wanted to do. No clue. You know what I mean? (P7)

Participants defined positive teacher characteristics as helpful and caring as documented in the section “Influential People before Prison”. Most participants did not attribute their academic uncertainty to teachers, rather described it in terms of taking personal responsibility for not being interested and/or motivated as verbalized by P5:

> I had good instructors. But then again, I wasn't really focused on, you know, I was undecided on what I want to do. I wasn't really focused on school that much. (P5)

This section revealed that being academically and/or career undecided was not related to teacher characteristics, but rather personal accountability.

Participants did not mention career counseling as a component of their educational history including pre-, during, and post-incarceration. I observed in the dataset that participants recalled during incarceration taking the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) academic assessment for the GED and/or the Work Keys assessments that measure essential workplace skills (ACT, 2020). The void of career counseling brought to light issues of career counseling during adolescent years and with incarcerated populations. Research on career counseling outcomes has validated its positive effects on one’s career-efficacy and stability (Lent & Brown, 2013; Meyer & Shippen, 2016; Killam, Degges-White, & Michel, 2016). These positive effects validate the need for evidence-based career counseling interventions with diverse populations.

Learning styles are different ways in which a student retains knowledge. The three learning styles according to neuro-linguistic programming are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (Arslan, 2013). Most participants described they learned best with “hands on” or “by doing” (P2, P3, P4, P5, and P7). Participants verbalized insight into how they learned best and how the prison environment was not accommodating due to the restrictive environment.

Theme #3: There's not a lot to do in Prison

The monotony of prison life was a thematic observation in the data made by every participant: "I felt like my life was on pause" (P4); "I'm just in a dorm with nothing to do, you know, I don't really have much to do in the dorm. You know, they wouldn't let us sleep between the hours of eight and four if we were caught with our backs on the bed, we would get written up" (P4). P4 shared thoughts about being idle contributing to a victim mindset. P4 later shared that involvement in educational programming and its contribution to a positive attitude and growth mindset.

Most participants discussed religious faith having a positive influence on their time served in regard to coping with incarceration.

> When you get there, it's your whole world that changes overnight. (P5)
>
> I really looked at God, talk to God about it a lot. Cause I was like, you know, this happened in my life for a reason. Like did God ordain this on my life for a reason? But what is he trying to do? So, I didn't blame him or get mad about it. I felt like I went to prison for a reason. (P4)
>
> I was in the Bible. I didn't really do anything else in there. (P5)

Data from this study confirmed that opportunities for involvement with faith-based programs run by volunteers superseded institutional offerings. Educational opportunities were scarce despite the generation one was incarcerated. Non-educational programs were predominantly made available by volunteers. The majority of non-educational programs were faith-based or specifically Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Prison jobs also referenced as prison industries were placed in this theme because participants shared their experiences and reasoning for seeking work.

The following section illustrates how participants coped with incarceration:

> I mainly walked during my time outside. (P5)

> Help them (other inmates) write letters to home and stuff like that. (P7)

> I would just go to the library and check out a book probably every other day. You know what I mean? That's just how I passed my time. I read books and stayed in my room. Tried to keep my nose clean. (P7)

Participants recalled that paid prison jobs were not readily available. Additionally, prison jobs typically did not contribute to skills for post-release success in the job market. P7 shared related experiences: "I had a job called cat detail" (P7). This job included walking the prison yard with a staff member who built "cat condos" for the stray cats. Other duties included feeding and dispensing eye drops in infected cats. P7 called this a job, when they were not monetarily compensated for work. Another job experience shared by P7 included manual labor working on the prison farm:

> Between the five of us, we picked like 3,000 pounds of sweet potatoes. They had left the crew before us had left. We got on our hands and knees, a little garden rakes, and pick those, took them to the kitchen. They (kitchen staff) swore they were going to cook them and some idiot put them in the freezer and ruined them. So, we had to throw them all away. And then the rest of the time we would just kind of sit in my boss's office and drink coffee and watch You Tube videos on his phone. (P7)

Participants who spoke about work in the prison described it as something to do to keep their minds and bodies busy. Participants shared memories of feelings of being uncomfortable with idle time. They spoke of seeing out activities to engage in that had a purpose. Whether it was reading, playing cards, playing checkers, or walking, these activities all demonstrated that human beings are not healthy when idle and will seek opportunities for stimulation, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The following examples portray the thinking patterns of how participants coped with boredom.

> The prison — not sleeping, the food, everything was, you know. My experience and enjoyment and stuff was at work release. (P5)

> I ran one of the canteens in my ward. (P6)

> I could choose between recycling, going back to school, doing groundwork, or working on the road. (P1)

> I had jobs sweeping tears. I got transferred from one prison to another. I decided I didn't want to sweep mop anymore, I wanted to do something with my head. I got a job in the library as a library clerk. (P2)

This participant was able to participate in work release and shared about the experience like no other participant did. This example shed light into the perspective in which created a humbling description.

> Being a prisoner and working somewhere, uh, it was totally humbling. I had went from being a supervisor, to being in prison, to going to work for someone, and being treated… They didn't treat you really well at first until they got to know me. The workers out there, they looked down on you because your, what you've done in your life and you know, they just feel like they're better than you. You know, they feel like you should, since you in prison, you should act a certain way. And I understand them, but there were several of them that treated you like you should be on a chain gang; I had the uniform on. If I didn't, I would've looked like anyone else would have been. (P5)

Participant 5 mentioned the prison uniform was worn while on work release and the negative experiences that resulted directly from it. This lived experience occurred during the 1990s. This example aligns with retribution theory of crime and punishment, which is not what correctional missions were designed to be.

Mindset-orientated comments by participants were originally coded as either growth or victim (Dweck, 2017). Thirty-six comments were coded for mindset, in which 33 were growth and three were victim. This finding correlated with the opening theme, "I was Raised to be Good." Mass incarceration data in the United States includes non-violent and drug offenders (National Research Council, 2014). These are learned behaviors and influenced by the amount of risk and protective factors that a person is exposed to. P4 summarized what most participants stated about their overall prison experience.

> I really looked at God, talked to God about it a lot. Cause I was like, you know, this happened in my life for a reason. Like did God ordain this on my life for a reason? But what is he trying to do? So, I didn't blame him or get mad about it. I felt like I went to

> prison for a reason even though I can't get those two years back of my life. And it was wasted. I feel like it happened for a reason, you know, maybe I would've never learned my lesson had this incident never happened. That at 17 (years) maybe I would've kept going and something worse would have happened. That's how I look at it. (P4)

Category: Influential people in prison.

All participants openly discussed their interactions with others from during incarceration. The category “Influential People in Prison” resulted from these disclosures. Influential people were identified as those who affected others and situations, either with a conscious intent or not. Identified people who comprised this category include prison administration, staff, program volunteers, and fellow inmates. Six out of seven transcripts included codes for this category.

Rehabilitation services is what the business of corrections is based upon. Participant 5 stated, “I know you got a certain set of rules, but it’s how it’s delivered and how you talk to people with respect.”

The lack of opportunity to build relationships and receive help from employees of the prison system was consistent with all of the experiences of the participants of this study. Participant 7 details feelings of not mattering and feeling unheard:

> I believe he [Case Manager] was supposed to be available to us twice a week and I never saw him. I tried to meet with him several times and he never could. He was never there.
>
> Just figured DOC you know, didn't care. That's about the only thing I can think of that just didn't matter to them. You know, that seems like that's all they wanted to do was just warehouse people. Anytime you asked any questions like that, they would get really kind of nasty about it. Like I said, they threatened to write me up for asking me if I could take two classes at once. And you know, I mean disciplinary action for trying to be proactive is just crazy to me. I just kept my mouth shut. (P7)

Some of the participants had fewer negative experiences and reported mutual respect with correctional officers and prison employees, but still did not identify any prison employees as positively influential. Participant 5 pointed out that there were employees who had good hearts and where there to help:

> They treated us really well. I could tell they had the Lord in their life, but they had a desire in their heart to help people that's struggling with addiction problems or just with life and to give us hope in life. We relied on the Lord to help us and we didn't have to do that anymore. At *prison* they were more, you know, everything seemed to be more in place there. They were more organized, more, you know. Captain, the Wardens that were there, they just had it going on. They knew what they were doing. And then I'm not saying that the other ones don't. I just, it wasn't like they were moving in and out. It was established. The same people were there for years, but like at *prison*, there were people coming, you know, the officers would come in and out, they would leave it. The turnover, it was more there, so it wasn't consistent. (P5)

The influential people identified through the interviews were volunteers and other inmates. Participants described the people who gave them hope and helped build them up to better people were not prison employees:

> I ended up in prison, you know, and I have you had to get a job or go to school, or something. So, I decided to go to school where I went on for a little bit. Quit that and went to work on the yard. Then I went up for parole, and they turned me down. Then I was back in the dorm, you know, 4-5 months later my roommate was, he had a life sentence, and he was 16 when he got it. And he'd been in there forever. But he was brilliant. He's the smartest man I met in my life and uh, back then you could go to college and all in there, you know. I think it was [*college name]* down there. So it was, he had all kind of degrees and was an electrician. (P6)

Participant 5 talked about how prison is like school and there are "pets" (students treated with favoritism). This participant didn't find that type of treatment genuine and frowned upon it. P5 cultivated a connection with the volunteer pastor:

> Yeah, so it's a fucking school. You have pets there; you have favorites in prison. You connect with some level, you know. I've seen that — it happens everywhere you go. I just kind of always was to myself. You know, the Pastor and I got close. I did have COs who I respected and ones I didn't respect because of how they treated you. They didn't treat you as a person. (P5)

Participant 2 also had similar experiences with the prison employees. Not all negative, but none were inspirational and impactful on the journey of change:

> They came and did their job with respect and dignity towards you. And then there was the ones that came in and treated you like you're an asshole for no reason. I'm going to ask him a simple question. They get shitty and snotty with you. There was a lot of them. (P2)

Open-coding categorized influences as either positive or negative. Positive influences included people who demonstrated they wanted the best for people and/or a situation. Negative influences included people who did the opposite. Data analysis concluded 42 codes: 34 Positive and 8 Negative. The most positive coded excerpts regarded inmate friendships (16); second was positive volunteer/group leader characteristics (14); and third was prison administration or security staff (4). There were eight excerpts coded for negative influences by six out of the seven participants. All of the statements referenced prison administration or staff, however, primarily corrections officers, as evidenced in the following:

> They [corrections officers] came and did their job with respect and dignity towards you. And then there was the ones that came in the treated you like you're an asshole for no reason. They get shitty and snotty with you. There was a lot of them. (P2)

> They [corrections officers] talked to you like dirt. The majority of them, there was one, maybe two out of the years that I was there on and off that I can remember that were cool. And they, you know, they came in, they respected you, they don't, you know, they made sure that stuff and if they seem something going on and they thought it wasn't going to be good for you, they let you know, 'hey look' you know. Mostly the people that were kind, generous and caring about you were the people that didn't have the badges on; the counselors, guidance counselors. (P2)

> You know, and I've been told by them that they (corrections officers) don't make that much money. So, you know in those areas, they easily influenced by prisoners. (P5)

> Yeah, so it's a fucking school. You have pets there; you have favorites in prison. You connect with some level, you know. I've seen that — it happens everywhere you go. I just kind of always was to myself. You know, the pastor and I got close. I did have COs [corrections officers] who I respected and ones I didn't respect because of how they treated you. They didn't treat you as a person. (P5)

> They [church volunteers] treated us really well. I could tell they had the Lord in their life, but they had a desire in their heart to help people that's struggling with addiction problems or just with life and to give us hope in life. We relied on the Lord to help us. (P5)

> I believe he [case manager] was supposed to be available to us twice a week and I never saw him. I tried to meet with him several times and he never could. He was never there. (P7)

> Just figured DOC you know, didn't care. That's about the only thing I can think of that just didn't matter to them. You know, that seems like that's all they wanted to do was just warehouse people. Anytime you asked any questions like that, they would get really kind of nasty about it. Like I said, they threatened to write me up for asking me if I could take two classes at once. And you know, I mean disciplinary action for trying to be proactive is just crazy to me. I just kept my mouth shut after that. (P7)

These participant statements share the common theme of being negatively influenced by corrections officers, prison staff, and prison operations. Inmate experiences were previously described by participants as “humbling” (P5) and “horrible” (P7) without the added negative influences and control from prison staff.

Positive influences were described by one participant as, “They [prison administration and staff] just had it going on” (P5). This was attributed to low staff turnover and organized operations. P5 had been incarcerated in multiple different institutions, so was able to develop this opinion based upon comparison.

> At [prison name] they were more, you know, everything seemed to be more in place there. They were more organized, more, you know. Captain and the wardens that were there, they just had it going on. They knew what they were doing. And then I'm not saying that the other ones don't. I just, it wasn't like they [staff]were moving in and out. It was established. The same people were there for years. But like at prison, there were people coming, you know, the officers would come in and out, they would leave it. The turnover, it was more there, so it wasn't consistent. (P5)

Participant 6 discussed two different inmate-friendships that had positive influences. These friendships demonstrated the magnitude of the influence of inmate relationships compared to staff or programming:

> I ended up in prison, you know, and I had to get a job or go to school, or something. So, I decided to go to school where I went on for a little bit. Quit that and went to work on the yard. Then I went up for parole and they turned me down. (P6)

> Then I was back in the dorm, you know, 4-5 months later my roommate was, he had a life sentence, and he was 16 when he got it. And he'd been in there forever. But he was brilliant; he’s the smartest man I met in my life. And back then you could go to college and all in there, you know. I think it was technical college name down there. So it was, he had all kind of degrees and was an electrician. [Interviewer: Did he get to work as an electrician?] No. He just went to school. (P6)

> A guy named X, we got to messing around. He had the canteen for years and he give it to me. (P6)

These friendships shared the importance of human connections in general as well as the society of prison. The canteen is a formal prison operation, and its management was given over from an inmate to another based on their friendship.

Category: Non-educational programs in prison.

For this study, non-educational programs in prison were defined as not having academic credit that could be awarded towards a formal academic credential. Non-educational programs were void of learning evaluations, content was not delivered by a certified teacher, and the programs were supportive in nature. Content was informative and delivered primarily through lecture.

All participants shared experiences with non-educational programs. A total of 61 codes were applied to non-education programs. Majority of programs were faith-based (26) and offered by local churches. Life and work skills programs were the second highest coded (29) and offered from the institution and local agencies, for example, pre-release preparation for job search and interview practice. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) was third highest in coding (5), and last was parenting (1).

The category "I Messed with Dope" included data that six out of seven participants discussed their substance abuse history as contributing to their criminal behavior. Data indicated a void of substance abuse treatment by licensed clinicians in prisons. P3 shared,

> I woke up one day [in prison], and I had been on drugs for three days. And I said I need to go; I need some help. I'm about to go up for parole. (P3)

Access to non-educational programs, such as substance abuse treatment, was described as having barriers related to institutional security levels and having an awareness of program availability. This participant described the process they experienced:

> You have to come fill out a form, yeah and tell him why you are interested in his class. You had to tell him how much longer we have on our sentence, what's our charge because, um, some of the trades had equipment in there that if you had like a too violent charge, you couldn't take it because of the things that you would be around. (P4)

> A preacher come in, taught us a class, said, "we'll see you quarterly." And I'm like, "well, what are we supposed to do? Put him on the shelf to come back?" So, he said, ["What do you have in mind?"] I said, "Well, I've been looking at a Christian catalog. Allow me to pick a curriculum and I'll teach myself and then I'll share it with the guys." And it started a spiritual life class. (P3)

> I only did in prison was AA meetings and church. That's what I stayed focused on. (P5)

> Organization that came there when I was at prison, but they would come. They were offer a two-day class and just focus on aspects of being in prison and trying to be a faith-based [program]. To help you deal with what's going on in your life and to trust in the Lord and just things from the Bible. They would have little study sheets to go through, and it was just kind of quick references that you could rely on to just keep going. It's in the Bible. (P5)

The preceding narratives illustrate what it was like to access non-educational programs in prison. These examples demonstrate that participants sought programming and understood the limitations influenced by the correctional environment.

Participant 7 talked about two experiences from different institutions:

> Prison #1: We had [character program name]. We had church. And that was it.
> Prison #2: We had AA meetings once a week. Um, I would go to that. It was, it was all right. Everything was in the church that we did, and the classroom was in the library. (P7)

Participant 7 talked about the negative experience attempting to apply to enroll in vocational programs. This experience validated for P7 that incarceration was more punishment than rehabilitation:

> Welding and carpentry class. Both of them wrote me back saying that since I'd signed up for the other one that I wasn't able to, to participate in either one of them. And, so, I

> finally got it to where I cancelled my carpentry requests so I can take a welding class. And I remember I wrote on the kiosk, I was like, well once I finished this welding class, would it be possible for me to take the carpentry class as well? And they wrote me back on the kiosk saying 'no that wouldn't be possible. You can only take one and that's all you get. And that if I wrote them again, I would be written up for abuse of privilege' - for just for asking questions like that. Needless to say, I didn't write them again. (P7)

Participant 3 stated, "My interest [in volunteering for the study] is that I did 23 years in prison, and I educated myself for the most part." This statement offers a rich description of emerged results from the data in that inmates face multiple challenges learning about and accessing programs in prison.

Category: Prison is a dangerous place.

Prison safety emerged from the data through statements related to racism, noise, and over-crowding. Prison culture and safety were concurrent themes in the data. P3 referenced prison culture as follows,

> We would go back into the dorms [after programming] and get caught back up and the day-to-day drama of penitentiary life. (P3)

Two participants discussed how they intentionally kept to themselves and noise being a barrier to coping with incarceration:

> We all had our own cells. There were only two people in there. So, I spent most of the time with the door closed, you know what I mean? Like I didn't really go around and seek out friends or whatever you want to call it, you know, like other people, what they had going on. I just kind of ignored. I just kept to myself. (P7)

> I mainly kept to myself in prison. I know, because of the gangs. (P5)

> It wasn't easy to read material because you were confined into an area where nobody shuts up. Reading on your own time was stressful in my dorm because there was always chaos, always noise, somebody cutting up. We weren't supposed to have ear plugs, but I had ear plugs from work, and I wore ear plugs to get privacy and to get quietness. (P5)

Two other participants made the following comments regarding witnessing extreme violence:

> At [prison name] you had to watch your back. That was a dangerous place[inaudible-killed-inaudible]. (P6)

> Seeing somebody's head get crushed open, that's just a day in the life— Fire, beat down— it didn't scare me. Just learned how to protect yourself. (P2)

Participant 6 managed the housing unit's canteen and shared that racism emerged in the form of inmate versus inmate. Participant 7 also shared a race-related comment,

> In the kitchen was, I don't know, there's tales of a lot of racism and whatnot going on. (P7)

> Well, you had to keep it stocked and go to the big canteen and buy your stuff and come back stock that. And keep the pots clean, you know, keep your knife clean, you know, and them black guys they try to rob you. (P6)

Two participants shared stories about temperature and how air conditioning was highly desirable because it contributed to less stress:

> [Prison] was a more updated prison. It had air conditioning. (P6)

> There's one dorm in the whole compound that had air conditioning. It's the character dorm. (P7)

A controlled temperature appeared to make a difference in the inmate experience. This participant shared an experience of a fight in a classroom:

> I remember getting kicked out of class for about a week because me and this girl got into it, and it was physical stuff going on. Like she hit me, and I hit her back. We both went to lockup, so, but they let me come back to class [after lockup]. (P1)

P1 made supportive statements of their enjoyment of learning, so being allowed back into the classroom after disciplinary action was notably appreciated.

Theme #4: School behind the Fence

Behind prison walls are societies similar to the one on the other side. There are social rules, culture, religion, laws, medical care, and education. There are relationships, friendships, and enemies. Participant 6 noted the commonalities between free society and incarceration.

> Well, they had a teacher, you know, and he was a big help. It's just like on-the-streets-school, you know. They had real school teachers, doctors, and nurses. (P6)

Another participant compared school in prison to school in society:

> It looks like a regular classroom. There's pictures on the wall, educational quotes, and stuff. Inspirational posters and stuff. Decorated like a normal outside classroom. (P4)

Notable differences obvious to laymen include inmates, uniforms, population ratio, and rules. Participants shared that they thought the main difference was instructional delivery and teacher characteristics. Participant 1 eloquently shared their positive feelings in great detail about attending the GED program in prison:

> I felt some type of way at first. I went back to my childhood days a little bit. I really enjoyed going to school to get my GED. I liked the part of where the bell rang, and I get to leave out of class and go take a restroom break — and I liked the fact the bell ring. I get, I know it was time for me to go back to my dorm and that you know, and they ring the bell for you to get into class. And just to me back to my school years. (P1)

These participants conveyed their feelings of accomplishment about earning their GED while incarcerated:

> I got my GED in prison. I felt great, you know, wow man, I said, the second time I went back to school I really got serious. Like I said, two months and I went down there and Aced that test, and oh man, I didn't think I could do it and I did it. (P6)

> I just feel happy that I accomplished something, you know, to have something to accomplish then under my belt and be able to say, I did this, you know, something that I felt like had to be done anyway. So, I felt like it was a milestone because I knew this is where it couldn't stop. You know, I knew I was going to have to pursue more education and that's what turned me on to trades in welding and carpentry. (P4)

The following participant statements were reflective and made known their current opinion of the importance of education:

> My thoughts to me — I used to say, if I would finished school would I be like this? (P1)

Participant 1 pondered about their children being able to attend college and shared that their grandparents have discussed financing it:

> So, my mom wanted to send us to college, just didn't have the money to do it. Cause we, you know, we didn't have a lot of money, you know, and stuff like that. I was talking about that cause like now, they really want to send their grandkids to college. (P1)

Participant 3 discussed the importance of a formal education as it related to career stability versus having a job. These statements proclaimed the value of education related to future career stability:

> It [GED] wasn't mandated, and you can see now how important it would be. (P3)

Interview conversations about education in prison highlighted access, program availability, and resources. Institutional security levels dictated educational opportunities regardless of the era of incarceration. Participants that were incarcerated when the Federal Pell Grant was available for incarcerated populations spoke about higher educational offerings.

Reasons to attend educational programs and non-educational programs were similar. Two participants revealed monetary and time off their sentence incentives. The following two participant disclosures verify the positive impact that incentives had on their decision to seek further education. Many participants shared that classroom and individual study time served as a positive coping mechanism for being incarcerated. Additional conceptualization brought to light the positive effect on their self-efficacy:

> I got my GED for something to do. It was in the eighties. They offered $20 if you passed the GED and $100.00 if you scored the highest. And so, I scored the highest and so it just a challenge to begin when I needed it. (P3).

> Originally, I did it for the good time; I was getting 10 days off a month for going to school, plus I was able to earn another five. So, I was getting 15 days off on a month. I just wanted the self-respect, you know, whatever you want to call it, self-achievement that I've done it, I got it. And I was able to do that. (P2)

Accessing programs began with having an awareness of what was offered. The common theme included inmate word of mouth or posters. Participant 5 was incarcerated in four different state-operated facilities and shared their conclusive thoughts regarding accessing education in prison:

> You had to make the willingness yourself to search for that and look for that. And if you didn't get it. It kind of goes back to what you want to do in there. But I don't remember them coming to me and encouraging me except for, you know, I don't remember the encouragement. This is being offered and I don't remember one person ever sitting down with me saying, look, this is offered. I really think that one-on-one that means a lot. That would have meant a lot to me if I was offered that right through someone that come to talk to me. Say, you might want to do this. (P5)

Participant 7 pondered how their awareness was made regarding education and the Work Keys Skills Training program. The inmate word of mouth took precedent at two state-operated facilities where they resided:

> I found out about this through like second-hand information like other inmates talking about it. Like one of the guys that stayed across the hall from me went to welding school. So just from talking to him, finding out how he got into it and stuff like that. (P7)

> I didn't even know that the lady was there. I was out playing basketball with my buddy and one of the other inmates walked up and was like, dude, aren't you trying to get your Work Keys? I was like, yeah why? They're doing it every 30 minutes. If you want to go you better now. (P7)

A barrier P7 also discussed was that the educational paper flyers posted on units were commonly taken by inmates just to have paper. Another participant's experience with flyers indicated their awareness was made because of them:

> People use any kind of paper they can find, like to keep score with spades or card games or write home because some people, you know, can't afford a notebook paper and stuff, so anything that gets put on the board, if you don't see it right when it gets put on the board, there's a chance that it's just, you know, you're going to miss out. (P7)

> On the door of every trade, they had a list of how much money a year this trade makes, and welding was the highest. So, everybody was like, oh, well this is the highest so, I'm going to attend this trade. (P4)

Many participants conversed about the topic of the GED being mandated or not. Issues included wait lists and age were either a hindrance or deterrent for involvement. Participant 2 reflected about the 1980s prior to the GED being mandated:

> There were no mandatory educational programs at that time. If you came in and wanted to do it, they did. Somewhere in the mid-eighties is when they decided to start mandating. If you didn't come in and was 25 [years] and under it was mandatory, had to go to GED classes. But the waiting list was so long [for inmates over age 21]. (P2)

These participants shared their experiences about the GED program being mandated due to age:

> Mandatory for us [under 21 years old] to attend school. (P4)
>
> If you're under 21 and you don't have your high school degree or high school diploma then you have to go, it's required. And that was really about the only ones that went. There might've been one or two that were just wanting to get it. The rest of them were going just because they had to. (P7)

Category: Educational resources and staff in prison.

This category emanated from interview responses about school resources in prison, specifically, classroom spaces, technology, libraries, and staff attributes. Staff were categorized as GED teachers, inmate teacher aides, and post-secondary instructors. Educational staff administrators were not identified in any interview transcript. Staff attributes were further identified during coding as positive or negative characteristics. A total of 25 positive characteristics and 18 negative characteristics were identified. A total of 13 positive characteristic codes were applied to inmate teacher aides/inmate tutors.

Interview responses about classrooms illustrated pictures of closets and traditional classrooms. Participants 3 and 6 described "closets":

> We took old closets, oh, mop closets to just have the old lockers in and had them remove them and turn them into classrooms to where ten people could sit in them. It worked out great. (P3)

> It was, uh, plenty of room. Not a closet room. A good-sized room. Desks just like in a school. Like I said, just like going to school on the outside. (P6)

Participants shared common responses about instructional delivery and teacher characteristics. The majority of participants mentioned self-study from a GED book and the substantial amount of help they received from inmate teacher aides. Participant 4 expressed in great detail about their experience in the GED program in prison. The comments reflect the motivation needed to be involved in self-study and the importance of guidance from others:

> It was very different than school out here though because the teachers didn't do too much talking and standing. It was more like they just give you, write stuff on the board, and give you worksheets and you pretty much have to read the directions and teach yourself. But they do talk a little bit, you know, they brief you on what you're going to be learning and how to do it and whatnot. (P4)

> So, he [teacher] gave me a big, thick GED book and he said, "uh, just study this. This is all you need." So, I just took it to the dorm. And every day I just reviewed to myself because you know, in prison there's not too much to do. So, I just figured, you know, there's very limited things to do in here, so why not try to, you know, better my life for when I get out so I can use this to better myself, you know. (P4)

> They would give you the Pre-GED book you could take back to your cell. And then eventually some of the prison started putting, they don't have computers in the living areas, but they had computers in the library. It's very limited resources on them, so the most you really could do on the computers while I was in there was look up books, maybe read a book on the computer. (P2)

> Every day I was just reviewing out that big GED book until I took all the tests. I finally passed it and whatnot. So that's when I started taking the trades. So, I started, I got my, um, I think it's in NCCER, something...core safety and carpentry. I got that while I was in there. Then I started taking a welding, but I wasn't in there long enough to get any certifications in welding because I got released. (P4)

Teacher characteristics were overall positive, as the data validated. Positive teacher attributes suggested positive educational experiences. Three participants acknowledged teachers in the following ways:

> She [teacher] was very nice. She helped me out. (P2)

> He [teacher] was always happy, and there were no smart mouth like the CO [corrections officers] would like on the yard, you know. Like I said, he was a good guy. (P6)

> I didn't like her [female teacher]. The dude teacher, um, when he substituted, because he was a substitute, but he had another class. He teached another class too. He was very helpful. (P1)

Another participant talked about an educational experience in which they observed differences among the student's intellect and how it negatively affected the learning environment:

> Ms. X who taught, I guess it was like a supposed to be a literacy class. And in some regard, it was. There was five of us that went, there was two of us, myself and XX, who were reasonably educated. And then the other three guys, I'd be surprised if they could spell their own name. So, her trying to balance us getting something out of it and them getting something out of it, I could see how it would be really difficult. It just kind of turned into like a religious thing with just her preaching. (P7)

An observation from the data included that significantly more comments were made by participants regarding inmate teacher aides. This is indicative that their roles were essential in the learning process and classroom management.

Participant 2 was an inmate teacher aide and shared what he enjoyed about the job:

> I helped with her overload or whatever she couldn't handle on that time. I'd score tests for her and stuff like that. (P2)

This participant genuinely enjoyed being a teacher aide and believed the work was valuable.

Prison libraries and law libraries were mentioned as resources. Participant 7 offered the most detail regarding access and materials:

> One day a week, restricted times from like 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM you will stay. Like, it was like for two hours a day you'd go and actually spend time in there on your day. You could only go once a week. It was just a really crappy library, you know. They didn't have much there. Um, I mean really there, all the books were, were pleasurable reading. You have to have a law library at every institution for people fighting their cases and stuff like that. Like it's required that they have a law library. And then recreational books, basically. Some GED books. (P7)

According to participant statements, college offerings were predominantly offered when the Federal Pell Grant was available during the 1980s through 1994. Participant 2 offered a rich description from their experience:

> The early ‘80s all the way up to 1990-1994, I guess it had to be right around 1995, they started cutting them. And the only college courses they really had were math, bookkeeping, and management classes. There wasn’t a whole lot that you could do. Psychology was one of them. (P2)

Many participants made statements about community colleges or university offered courses while incarcerated. The following three participants shared their personal experiences with post-secondary education while incarcerated:

> One prison I was in [*community college name]* was involved with the prison somehow and they were bringing it in. Some of it was paid for through state funds, but some of it also their (inmate) families had to do a portion of something; mostly books, but the families had to buy the books. And tuition cost you had to apply for, and the college took care of. I mean there was a lot, a lot of people that were interested in going, but they (prison) had a list that said you had this much time you couldn’t go; if you had too much time you couldn’t go. (P2)

> We had volunteers coming in and brought their college books and taught us communication classes at a college level. And that's because the space had been created. The character traits had been painted on the walls. The day rooms was closed off to cards and checkers in the daytime for educational purposes. People would come in and bring projectors and videos and help. And so it's, it's, it's beginning to take hold and people are starting to recognize the value of going inside and actually teaching somebody something. (P3)

> A college came and, believe it or not, all they offer is criminal law, but we're all inmates, so I'm going into criminal law, makes absolutely no sense. (P7)

This section revealed participant perspectives about the value of education. Participants talked about teachers who cultivated positive environments and cared about student learning. Participants also discussed how positive relationships had positive effects on self-esteem and self-efficacy. These positive experiences contributed to their educational success.

Theme #5: I got out of prison, so now what?

Participants realized the incompatible objectives between the reality of incarceration and society’s perceptions. Participant 3 reflected upon a memory of when he observed released inmates getting off a city bus from incarceration:

> You can go to the bus station on the first [of the month]. Well, normally the people that's got to get rides gets off on the first. But on the 3rd most likely go to the bus station … when the buses come in, and you could see individuals that are coming out of incarceration, and they're drifting into the night. No help, no nobody to pick them up, and no one to actually say, “look, I've been there, done that, and I will walk you through the steps of what it takes to be successful.” (P3)

Another participant reminisced about the stress-related tasks necessary for a successful reintegration to society:

> I needed a job. I had to get a whole new birth certificate, social security card, I had to get ahold of everything. So, basically, what I did, I got a job immediately when I got out and started handling, you know, the small things, the necessities I needed to take care of at the time. (P4)

This participant discussed their positive experience with pre-release services and how he felt supported for a successful re-entry:

> All the resources were brought to me. I just had to show I was interested. (P7)

This participant’s view aligns with Participant 4’s growth mindset statement:

> You know, the intellectual ability has always been there, but it is the mindset of applying it or not. That's why a lot of people who grew up with me, really, tell me I've changed a lot. I came a long way from my mindset growing up in school to right now. (P4)

Participant 6 shared their post-release experiences with drugs, GED, and employment:

> I messed with it [drugs] a little bit when I first got out, but not selling it. No, none of that. (P6)

This participant noted a difference between using and selling drugs. They suggested that using drugs was acceptable, but selling was not. This participant was also the only one who bluntly stated the GED was not beneficial for post-release employment:

> It [GED] never done me a bit of good. (P6)

However, in contrast, when P6 earned the GED in prison, he noted that earning it prompted many positive experiences and contributed to increased self-efficacy as cited within the theme, “School Behind the Fence.” This participant was gainfully employed and maintained employment for an extended amount of time. These factors contributed to P6’s post-release success in terms of not recidivating:

> He was the owner; I was the supervisor. I worked there 9-10 years, then we all parted ways you know. (P6)

Participant 3 emphasized that employment was essential to a successful societal reintegration, however, addressing personal limitations that superseded employment:

> So, when I got out, I was offered these jobs at different places, but inside I needed to adjust back into society. So, I knew that there had to be some boundaries in place, or my same spoiled character would rise up. (P3)

Participant 3 was very passionate about preventing recidivism and mentioned their interest was rooted in having spent 23 years incarcerated. This participant was involved with a community reintegration organization that assisted inmates’ pre-release with preparing for a successful reintegration. They gave a rich description about common barriers that individuals experience immediately post-release:

> What we like to say is the inside drives the outside. And because, think of it, hypothetically, an individual gets out, there is a program that can teach him these soft skills, but he has five years of child support, a monitor, and probation that he has to pay for. Then you got rent and everything else—daily life it's gonna come at you. So, you can't spend all your time in the classroom, cut through red tape just to get a certificate to get a better job. Right? So, whereas if we handled this on the inside, when individuals have the time, the classroom space is there, then, um, it takes care of it while they're doing something positive with your time instead of just sitting in a cell. (P3)

“Influential people” resonated with statements regarding a successful reintegration, as well as its continuation. Many participants identified specific people and tasks that contributed either positively or negatively. The most commonly stated included family members serving as integral “positive people.” Participant 2, for example, shared their strong feelings about their mother and the important role she had in their life:

> My biggest support system was my mom. She was my biggest encouragement. She was the one who was always there. When everybody else vacated me, she was there. She always, always told me [“You can do great things”]. And, like I said, if I had put forth more effort in doing good things than bad things. When she died, she was very proud of me. (P2)

This participant continued to share their thoughts, many of which shed light into their self-efficacy, suggesting an awareness of ability as well as insight into their current growth mindset.:

> If I do bad, I do it well, and if I do good, I do it well. (P2)

Participant 1 made the following statement that served as an example suggesting a victim mindset and justification for past criminal behaviors:

> My kids know why I went to prison. They’ll tell you my parent did it [the crime] to take care of us. Because they was a single [*parent]* and struggled to take care of us. They’ll tell you that's why I went to prison. (P1)

This participant engaged in the GED program while incarcerated and enjoyed it, as noted within the theme “School Behind the Fence.” P1 did not continue their GED program after being released because of the more demanding need for immediate employment.

Category: School after prison.

This “school after prison” category was an important component to this study because it was reflective of participants’ previous correctional education experiences. Data from this study

confirmed that primary needs for re-entry included housing, employment, and identified support systems. Additionally, most participants in this study who entered prison without an earned high school diploma left prison with an earned GED. Some participants spoke about participating in college coursework but not earning a credential before release. Participants verbalized an interest in continuing their education and/or job training post-release but satisfying basic and financial needs took precedent. The data confirmed this with the lowest number of code applications, occurrences, and presence for this theme.

Participant 4 earned a post-secondary credit-bearing credential after incarceration. This participant contributed their success to feeling supported because the program was 100% funded with a scholarship. In addition, the community college program and curriculum were designed on best practices for under-resourced college students (Becker, Krodel, & Tucker, 2009). P4 noted that they learned about the college program from a childhood mentor that they continued to contact for help and guidance. This serves as an example of how the core theme, "I was Raised to be Good," and this theme "school after prison," being weaved together.

> I just felt like it was the first time in my life when I actually tried to apply myself in a classroom. (P4)

Summary

Figure 1 (below) provides a visual representation of the emergent themes and categories and the commonalities among them. Data analysis revealed the center theme was rooted throughout all categories. The core theme "I was Raised to be Good" is in the center purple circle, identifying it as the core theme among all the emergent themes and categories. Every theme and category essentially related back to participants' statements about their upbringing. The Theme "I was Raised to be Good" was rooted with remarks pertaining to positive interpersonal relationships. These relationships were void of abuse and neglect, cultivated pro-

social values, and identified with feelings of happiness and security. The significance of this theme positioned in the center of the figure represents it core centric value in the overall study.

Figure 1. *Relational components among themes and conceptual categories.*

The remaining themes are identified by title within the green shapes: "School before prison," "there's not a lot to do in prison," "school behind the fence," and "I got out of prison, so now what?" These themes are placed around the core theme to illustrate the same core-concept of positive influential people. The data indicated that positive people cultivated happiness, which contributed to growth in their mindset and motivation to succeed. Based on participants' remarks, the prison educational programs were seen as a positive experience regardless of the quantity of available materials, class occurrence, and even the course content. If they experienced happy/pleasant events, the participants tended to value education higher compared with those who had negative experiences.

Within these themes are the categories, indicated in the figure yellow shapes: **“**Influential People before Prison,” “I Messed with Dope,” “Influential People in Prison,” “Non-Educational Programs in Prison,” “Prison is a Dangerous Place,” “Educational Resources and Staff in Prison,” and “School after Prison.”

As Participant 6 stated,

> I paid for what I did, you know. Anybody who quit school, go back and get your GED. Go on to college. The life I’ve lived ain’t worth living. (P6)

This statement resonated with the purpose of this study. Uniquely, P6 stated that completing the GED did not assist with post-release employment. However, he also mentioned the benefits gained from the GED program occurred while incarcerated. School and homework occupied his thoughts and he felt accomplished.

Reflections on the Interview Results

I initiated this study from my long-term and passionate belief that education should cultivate a positive learning environment and teaches students how to learn. My professional experience working in corrections allowed me opportunities to experience and observe school operations in a correctional environment. I intentionally observed and listened to inmate-students, education staff, and security staff about the benefits and challenges of school in prison.

I routinely read the literature on topics on andragogy, correctional education, and student development. I read about these topics for curiosity and professional development. Research about student learning and development (Cuseo, Fecas, & Thompson, 2020) identify specific principles for success with adult learners including Active Involvement, Utilizing Campus Resources, Social Interaction & Collaboration, and Self-Reflection.

This phenomenological study is based on the experiences of those who attended school while in a correctional environment. Participants stated their primary reasons for participating in

this study included their belief that education in prison contributed to successful post-release life, as well as providing a positive coping mechanism during incarceration. Participants recognized that decreased stress lowered their involvement with "prison drama" (P3), which in turn created safer learning and living conditions.

Participants emphasized the importance of rehabilitative correctional programming for all stages of incarceration: Entry, mid-sentence, pre-entry, and re-entry. They acknowledged that individuals have different needs at the different stages as they transition from a public society to an incarcerated one. Participants talked about their different needs at different stages of incarceration including housing, employment, and basic survival needs. Data from this study validated that incarcerated people from all security level facilities both appreciated and engaged in educational opportunities when available. Participant 3 eloquently stated:

> We all got something going on in our lives that if we feed it, it can bring us down. And so, and I would like to see people stop turning their nose up at those that are less fortunate or have made mistakes and falling, and just all helping. (P3)

"Just all helping" is truly how my dissertation journey began.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

The majority of current literature on correctional education is written by professionals and focuses on recidivism and direct cost outcomes. A deficit exists regarding the correctional education experience from the perspective of the inmate student. However, the student is a core component to education. In response, I designed a phenomenological study to investigate this void in the literature. This study specifically investigated correctional education program elements such as instructional quality, educational resources, and environmental conditions. The essence was to capture the lived experiences from the inmate student's perspective and use this to contribute to advancements in correctional education.

I conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with seven participants who shared their experiences as an inmate student. The one pilot and seven interview participants expressed appreciation for sharing their experiences and conveyed an understanding that the research goal was to contribute to moving the field of correctional education forward. Using evidence from these interviews, I was able to illustrate what it meant for incarcerated individuals to access, enroll, and attend school in a correctional institution.

The sample size of seven participants aligned with the evidence base for a qualitative study utilizing one-on-one interviews as a data collection technique (Galvin, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morgan, Fischoff, Bostrom, & Atman, 2002). According to empirical evidence, the probability of identifying a concept (theme) among a sample of six individuals is greater than 99% if that concept is shared among 55% of the larger study population (Galvin, 2015).

Five leading themes emerged from the interviews that facilitated an understanding of participants' educational past, present, and future plans. Identified emergent themes were all centered on influential people in participants' lives. Influential people are defined as positive or negative in the context of the results. These themes are

1. I was raised to be good
2. School before prison
3. There's not a lot to do in prison
4. School behind the fence
5. I got out of prison, so now what?

Summary of Findings

The essence of the correctional education experience included minimal opportunities beyond the GED program, limited educational resources, and a strong reliance on inmate tutors for academic assistance and motivation. The chief constituent of participants' learning about educational opportunities and pursuing enrollment was self-initiated.

The most unanticipated finding included the theme of influential people. Specifically, those who had a positive influence on the participant's educational experiences. This finding was connected to matriculation and withdrawal. For example, positive influences were affiliated with future career plans and higher levels of intrinsic motivation. On the contrary, negative influences contributed to educational discouragement and a lack of futuristic planning. Parallel to these findings, it is suggested that influential people during incarceration contributed to academic post-release success.

Study Limitations

The scope of the study was confined to seven participants who had experienced the research phenomena. This study did not include perspectives from prison administration, education, or security staff. This study was limited to the inmate student perspective because it is absent throughout the literature. Students are core components to education; hence, their perspectives are critically important for evaluation.

Research involving correctional education poses additional limitations when compared to other educational research studies because incarcerated human subjects have additional regulations beyond the basic requirement for research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavior Research, 1979). This limitation was identified, and coverage was ensured for this study with the following recruitment and enrollment methods. Recruitment materials clearly indicated that participants could not currently be under correctional supervision. Additionally, I verbally reviewed this requirement during the eligibility screening process. Finally, participants acknowledged this by signing the Informed Consent form.

Limitations were confined to purposeful sampling and gaining access to the target population. I had to identify and connect with entities where the target population was identified. Next, I had to establish trustworthiness and gain permission to post recruitment flyers. I posted recruitment flyers in multiple local venues and connected with many likeminded groups of people. In many instances I never received an interview inquiry. I acknowledged the limitation and re-focused my recruitment efforts to entities that generated interest. In the end, word-of-mouth was the highest referral source.

Rigor

Phenomenological theory methodology is a rigorous approach that contains the essential elements of transferability, dependability, confirmability, and credibility (Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These elements are specifications for data reliability and validity, in which establish trustworthiness and consistency in the data findings. Validity in qualitative research relates to the honesty and genuineness of the research data. The validity of research findings refers to the extent to which the findings are an accurate representation of the phenomena they are intended to represent.

This study addressed components of rigor as outlined in Chapter III. I did constant comparison of the research findings to ensure the method was maintained. Data saturation indicated the evidence was convincing and that no further collection was necessary.

Transferability is demonstrated in qualitative research when the findings are transferable to other contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transference is based upon the study's attributes of sample size, participant diversity, and methodology. This study collected information from individuals who experienced the research phenomena in different states and at different institutions. The findings were assured as transferable after saturation was identified.

Dependability relates to the reproducibility of the findings and stability of the data (Golafshani, 2003). In this study, all seven interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to avoid interpretative errors. Accuracy was ensured by reviewing each transcript against the audio prior to data analyzation. This method established internal validity of the data.

Confirmability is the degree of researcher neutrality displayed allowing the data to speak for itself (Merriam, 2009, p. 209). Bracketing is an intentional method used in phenomenological research that establishes researcher objectivity to the research phenomenon. Different forms of bracketing expose the researcher's perception of the data and offers insight into potential bias. I

conducted bracketing activities both individually and with the dissertation committee from the point of the literature review through data analyzation. Bracketing activities shed light into my reasons for pursuing this research topic both professionally and personally. I was able to identify areas of interest and concern through bracketing exercises. I logged and discussed findings with the dissertation committee throughout data analyzation. Some of the findings were identified for areas of possible future research. This practice allowed me to remain objective to the data and remain focused on the topic under investigation. In this study, identified themes and categories are firmly rooted in the participants' voices.

Recommendations for Possible Research

Education involves complex human interactions that can rarely be studied or explained in simple terms (Cuseo et al., 2020). Qualitative research can sometimes provide a better understanding of the nature of educational problems and, thus, add to insights into teaching and learning. I identified three important recommendations for possible research from the emergent themes as reported in this study's findings. I also considered federal commitments for correctional education from the United States Department of Education and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. My recommendations align with these entities' educational mission statements, thus, should be considered at a macro level. Additionally, my recommendations are applicable at a micro level, providing correctional education practitioners opportunities for individual exploration and research.

The first recommendation for future research includes career counseling for diverse populations, specifically incarcerated populations. The current literature on career counseling presents an evidence base for best practices for K-12 educational systems. However, there is a void regarding career counseling with diverse populations. Evidence indicates that one key

outcome to a successful re-entry after incarceration is employment. Examining career counseling programs that help incarcerated individuals identify post-release employment would provide valuable findings.

The second recommendation for possible research includes examining the role of inmate tutor / teacher aide. One finding from this study indicated the critical role inmate tutors had in the prison classroom and on housing units. Participants made statements that supported the need for competent inmate tutors. In addition, participants shared their observations regarding how much the education staff relied on the inmate tutors for classroom management. Thus, future research could investigate institutional staffing and the role of inmate tutors. A study on this topic would shed insight into possibilities for the inmate tutor position and should include credentialing, official training, compensation, and mentorship opportunities.

A final and third recommendation for future research would be to examine and evaluate the practice of teaching and the levels of instructional quality within the prison environment. The target population would include prison security, programs staff, and administration. These target populations can offer insight into the benefits and challenges of correctional education programs from a provider's standpoint. This type of study would contribute to strengthening the evidence base of correctional education practices. In discussing the possibilities of such a study with a professional (anonymous) colleague who taught in a correctional environment for several years, I learned of the benefits of teaching in the correctional environment, including that classroom management was additionally controlled with corrections officers' presence. She stated there was less behavior management compared to teaching in public school. Additionally, she stated the inmate students were a "captive audience" in which they were very interested in learning. She shared many memories about past students who did not perform well academically prior to

incarceration but who excelled in her prison classroom. She contributed this observation to social distractions being minimized and students being able to focus on their studies.

In addition to these benefits, she identified several barriers to correctional education. She discussed the minimal amount of state resources to maximize student learning, including classroom materials and technology. Another barrier was the lack of professional development opportunities for instructors working with vulnerable populations to help them understand the inmates' educational and personal needs. She stressed that although appropriate teaching credentials are important, training to understand the student population is just as paramount.

These recommendations may be helpful for practitioners and decision makers at local levels for immediate implementation. They may also assist policymakers because they describe the setting in which policies will be implemented. Furthermore, at the macro level, the American Correctional Association and the Correctional Education Association, two leading professional associations committed to improving the practices in correctional education, can and should utilize these findings to further advance the field of correctional education.

Conclusions

While much still remains to be done, this study's findings are encouraging and the recommendations for future research can move the field of correctional education forward. Additionally, the results allow for transformative conversations to start and continue across different platforms. Issues about leveraging resources, improving reentry outcomes, and the social return of education are all topics from the participant's perspective that are under-researched and understood.

Correctional education is a social justice issue that has been important to me throughout my college and professional career. My first professional experience working with correctional

populations was in 2000 when I served as an intern for the State of Michigan's Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole Department. I witnessed the collateral consequences of incarceration both for the probationer or parolee and their families. I observed the lack of formal education and training that individuals re-entering society had. Employment was not only necessary for survival, but a condition for community supervision. I recall observing that the majority of people under supervision worked in food service, landscaping, or manufacturing.

While my curiosity was sparked in 2000, I haven't stopped pursuing an understanding of the current state of correctional education. I follow advocacy organizations focusing on correctional education, and I have demonstrated through the current literature and statistics that correctional education is cost-effective in regard to reducing the risk of recidivism. The current evidence base for correctional education supports the need for formal education and life skills training programs for correctional populations.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research

Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, 220 Ferris Drive, FLITE 410D · Big Rapids, MI 49307

Date: February 15, 2018

To: Dr. Nancy Hogan and Julianne J. DiCicco-Wiles

From: Dr. Gregory Wellman, IRB Chair

Re: IRB Application #171201, *Examining the Characteristics of Correctional Educational Programs*

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, *Examining the Characteristics of Correctional Educational Programs,* (#171201) and approved it based a full committee review at the February IRB Full Board Review Meeting. The IRB Committee agreed to approve this project for a year. **As such, you may collect data according to the procedures outlined in your application until February 15, 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 (#171201), which you should refer to in future correspondence involving this same research procedure. 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 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 annual reviews of approved projects and Final Report forms once protocols using human subjects in research are completed. 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,

Ferris State University Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Version 1.2015

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION, COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Study Title: Examining the Characteristics of Correctional Education: A Qualitative Study Giving Voice to the Experiences of Inmate Learners.

Principal Investigator/Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nancy Hogan, Ferris State University

Co-Investigator: Julianne DiCicco, MS, ABD, Ferris State University

IRB Study Number: 171201

I, Julianne DiCicco-Wiles, am a doctoral student in the Community College Leadership program at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan. I am conducting a study as part of my dissertation research and would value your participation. I am studying the characteristics of academic correctional educational programs from the perspective of previously incarcerated individuals. 'Justice-involved individuals' for this study are defined as individuals who were formally incarcerated in either a state department of corrections facility or with the Federal Bureau of Prisons. This form has important information about the reason for doing this study, what we will ask you to do if you decide to be in this study, and the way we would like to use information about you if you choose to be in the study.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the characteristics of academic correctional education programs and individual characteristics. The goals of the study are: (1) To contribute in the development of evidence-based practices for correctional education and (2) To support future research between correctional education and researchers and evaluators.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

You will be asked to participate in an interview with the co-investigator, Julianne DiCicco-Wiles. Interview questions are focused on your educational experiences prior, during, and after incarceration - in an adult correctional facility. The interview questions will be made available if you request to preview them prior to signing the consent form.

Study time: The interview will be 60-90 minutes in time.

Study location and recording information

The interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and location between Julianne DiCicco-Wiles and the eligible participant. The location will ensure privacy, confidentiality, and safety of both parties. The location may be virtual using Skype technology to support a live interview. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed in the form of a typed transcript intended to capture an accurate record of the discussion and to be analyzed by the researcher. Audio recordings will be heard only by the researchers and/or a hired transcriptionist who is trained in transcribing and will be destroyed following transcription.

Transcripts will be securely maintained by the researcher on an encrypted device that is also password protected, in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home for a period of three years following the

study, at which time they will be permanently destroyed. If you prefer *not* to be audio recorded, I will take notes instead. I may quote your remarks in presentations or articles resulting from this work. An identifier (e.g., Participant 1, etc.) will be used to protect your identity and maximize the need for protection of your information.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

To the best of our knowledge, your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you beyond that of everyday life. In the instance you feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions, tell the interviewer at any time if you wish to take a break or stop the interview. You are free to not answer or to skip to the next question. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality of the information we collect from you could be breached – we will take steps to minimize this risk, as discussed in more detail below in this form.

What are the possible benefits for me or others?

You are not likely to have any direct benefit from being in this research study. This study is designed to learn more about academic educational programs within adult correctional institutions. The study results may be used to help other people in the future. Taking part in this research study may not benefit you personally, but we may learn new things that will help others.

How will you protect the information you collect about me, and how will that information be shared?

Results of this study may be used in publications and presentations. Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, all personally identifiable information will be altered using a fake name.

To protect your confidentiality: (1) Paper files will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home, (2) Electronic files will be stored on an encrypted storage device that is password-protected in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home, and (3) Both paper and electronic files will be kept no more than three years past the end date of the study, managed, and permanently destroyed by the co-investigator, Julianne DiCicco-Wiles.

We may share the data we collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data is shared, all information about you will be identified with a fake name. If we think that you intend to harm yourself or others, we will notify the appropriate people with this information.

<u>Financial Information</u>. Participation in this study will involve no cost to you. You will be offered a $20.00 gift card for your time.

What are my rights as a research participant?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer. If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to participate in this study, please feel free not to. If at any time you would like to stop participating, please tell me. We can take a break, stop and continue at a later date, or stop altogether. You may withdraw from this study at any time, and you will not be penalized in any way for deciding to stop participation. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the researchers will ask you if the information already collected from you can be used and honor your answer.

Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns about this research study?

If you have questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researchers:

Julianne DiCicco-Wiles Cell: xxxxxxx Email: xxxxxx
Dr. Nancy Hogan Office: xxxxxx Email: xxxxx

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you can contact the following office at Ferris State University: Office of Research & Sponsored Programs/Institutional Review Board (IRB), 1010 Campus Drive, FLITE 410G, Big Rapids, MI 49307 Phone: (231) 591-2553, Email: IRB@ferris.edu

Consent

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form.

I have been explained that this research plan has undergone the scrutiny of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Ferris State University and that the researcher has received approval to proceed with this interview research.

In the researcher's dissertation, as well as any publications or presentations that are developed from these interviews, I understand that my identity will be concealed using a code identifier (e.g., Participant 1, etc.) to maximize confidentiality.

SIGNATURES

Participant Signature ______________________________ Date ____________________

Participant Printed Name__________________________

Researcher Signature ______________________________ Date ____________________

Researcher Printed Name _________________________

Note: The researcher will give me a copy of this signed consent following the interview.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Capturing the essence of experiencing education within a correctional environment through story telling

I. ICEBREAKERS

1. Tell me why you volunteered for this study.
2. Tell me a little about yourself.

II. PRE-INCARCERATION

"Tell me about your school experiences prior to incarceration."

- Public, private, charter
- Highest level of education completed prior to incarceration.
- Earned academic credentials
- Vocational certificates
- Officially dropped out
  - What grade/age? Circumstances
- High School Diploma or GED
- Online educational experiences
- Standardized testing experiences and/or scores (ACT, SAT, GED, TABE, WorkKeys)
- Career inventory/assessment

III. DURING INCARCERATION

"Tell me about your school experiences while incarcerated."

- Curriculum program (ABE, ASE, GED, Post-secondary)
- Reasons for participation?
  - Voluntary versus mandated. If voluntary, were there admissions criteria?
  - Was there a wait period? If yes, why do you think there was?
- Academic placement assessments
- Resources:
  - Library
  - Books: Hard copy or electronic
  - Computers
  - Tutors
  - Teacher aides
- Developmental coursework
- Type of instruction: Face-to-face, computer instruction (modules)
- How many days per week and time (dosage)
- Instructor characteristics
- Post-secondary:
  - Did you earn post-secondary credit?
  - Did you earn a credential?
- Academic Advisors
- Facilities:
  - Classroom environment
  - Instructor to student ratio
  - Technology

IV. POST-INCARCERATION

"Tell me about your school experiences after incarceration."

- Did you attend an educational or job training program after incarceration?

- What, why, how did you learn about it?

- Did you earn an academic credential or training certificate?
- How was the course/program funded?
- Did your support system support you? If yes, how?

V. EDUCATION IN GENERAL

- Tell me about the most positive school experience you had.
- Tell me about your favorite & least favorite instructors
- In only a few words, how would you describe your close family's and friends' beliefs
- about school?
- How would you describe your academic success as a student?
- What does education mean to you?
- How do you define success?

VI: OTHER

1. Is there anything you haven't shared that you would like to?

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT FLYER

Did you go to school while incarcerated?

Looking for individuals to interview about their educational experiences!

$20.00 Gift card for 1 hour of your time!

ELIGIBILITY
•18+ Years of age
• *NOT* on probation or parole
• Attended school while incarcerated in a state or federal correctional facility

INTERVIEW INFORMATION

1. Participants are anonymous
2. Interviews are approximately 1 hour each
3. Interview questions are available for preview
4. Public locations to ensure confidentiality and safety for everyone

HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?
Contact: Julianne DiCicco, MS, ABD
xxx-xxx-xxxx
[email address]