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**Forgotten Population: The Value of Correctional Education Programs from the Lived
Experiences and Perspectives of Formerly Incarcerated Women in New York State**

By

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Department of Educational Leadership, Management and Policy
Seton Hall University
South Orange, NJ

2023

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LEADERSHIP,
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APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Cassandra D. Garrett has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Fall 2023**.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, mother, and a dear friend.

To my daughter, India, with love. I thank you for being compassionate and understanding when Mommy was writing; your ability to show immensurable courage at such a young age has inspired me to be better. Mommy loves you, “Indie”.

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Abstract

In the United States correctional education programs are part of the federal and state prisons effort to rehabilitate offenders. Prisoners may be rehabilitated by learning skills that can prepare them for reintegration into society post-release. This study explored the value of correctional education programs in assisting formerly incarcerated women in avoiding recidivism in New York state. The qualitative interpretive study used semi-structured interviews of 10 formerly incarcerated women released from a New York state jail or prison during 2017 – 2022. The results of this study suggest that low school attainment is one of the educational risk factors associated with adult offending, incarceration, and recidivism. The research also shows that women prisoners participate in correctional educational programs due to the value attached to these programs, inclusive of a supportive and nurturing environment, enhanced employment prospects post-release, and successful reintegration into society. The study concluded that correctional educational programs are valuable in helping to prepare formerly incarcerated women for improved life conditions post-release without engaging in criminal behavior.

Keywords: incarceration, rehabilitation, recidivism, correctional education programs, reintegration

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Each year, imprisoned adults in the United States leave jails and prisons and join society. Though many released offenders reintegrate into society and become productive, some re-offend and return to prisons (Antenangeli & Durose, 2021; Collica-Cox & Furst, 2018). In the study examining jails programs for women, Collica-Cox and Furst (2018) provided a clear picture of this challenge by noting that 68% of prisoners recidivate – in other words, commit new crimes upon their release and are returned into the prison environment – in a period of three years after release. In its most recent report, the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that 83% of male prisoners and 76% of female prisoners are arrested within 10 years of release with 66% of them rearrested for new offenses (Antenanageli & Durose, 2021). These statistics indicate that the prison system is clogged, and much of it is a result of recidivism.

Though factors associated with recidivism differ for men and women, empirical literature cited issues such as homelessness, lack of housing, drug use, lack of access to community services, education and unemployment as common causes (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2018; Koo, 2015). According to Koo (2015), socioeconomic status and incarceration length influence recidivism rates. Consistently, a Bureau of Justice report showed that prisoners who serve less time have a higher recidivism rate than those who serve more time (Antenangeli & Durose, 2021). The Bureau of Justice Statistics showed that 81% of prisoners who serve less than 15 months of prison time were arrested within 10 years after their release compared to those who served more time.

Notably, scholarly studies showed that a lack of education is significant among the factors that explain why some offenders succeed post-release and others do not (Davis et al., 2013; Koo, 2015). The statistics showing reduced recidivism indicated that education could help address the problem. For example, a research study in South Carolina found that prisoners who earned college degrees had about 4% recidivism compared to 33% of prisoners without a college degree or who did not earn one while in prison (Magee, 2021). Thus, education achievement is a critical factor that the criminal justice system can address during incarceration (Magee, 2021).

Prisons and jails often provide recidivism prevention programs to prisoners who entered without having completed an introductory schooling course (Davis et al., 2013). Reports from the RAND Corporation showed that over time prison education programs save taxpayers money (Davis et al., 2013). According to their results, the likelihood of a prisoner being sent back to jail or prison is cut in half for those who participated in educational programs (Davis et al., 2013). For example, Davis and Linton (2021) found that one dollar invested in correctional education programs can save four to five taxpayer dollars over the first three years after release. Therefore, when leaving incarceration with basic education skills, vocational training, a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), or higher education, some offenders qualified for employment opportunities. Also, the completion of these correctional education programs seemed to motivate some offenders away from their former criminal lifestyle (Mohammed & Wan Mohamed, 2015).

Correctional education programs, which are a form of educational classes or training conducted within a prison setting, are implemented based on evidence that most prisoners are undereducated and documented the influence of low education attainment on antisocial behaviors (Duwe, 2017). According to Teng and Gordon (2021), the most significant percentage of inmates in federal and state prisons come from backgrounds with limited educational

opportunities. Teng and Gordon showed that in 2004, roughly 36% of detainees in state jails did not have a secondary school education compared with 19% of the U.S. population. Most of the prisoners earned high school diplomas and vocational training while serving their sentences.

In the United States correctional education programs are part of the federal and state prisons' effort to rehabilitate offenders (Koo, 2015). Prisoners are rehabilitated by learning skills that can prepare them for reintegration into society post-release. According to Koo (2015), the Federal Bureau of Prisons places great effort in rehabilitating incarcerated individuals by requiring them to have a high school level in mathematics, reading, and writing. If an incarcerated individual enters a federal prison without meeting these standards, they are automatically enrolled in a GED or a "primary education for adults" program, (Koo, 2015, p. 239).

About 90% of U.S. federal prisons now offer correctional education programs to prisoners (Koo, 2015). Though state prisons offer correctional education programs, they have different programs to equip incarcerated individuals with the life skills needed to reintegrate into society post-release. Each state has the flexibility of creating its own correctional education programs. Several state correctional agencies expect incarcerated individuals to participate in instructional programs if they do not have a high school diploma or GED and if the detainees have not attained at least a 6th grade education.

Support for correctional education programs indicate they help offenders acquire education skills during incarceration based on the rationale that formerly incarcerated individuals who participate in these programs would get sustainable employment that can reduce their likelihood of engaging in criminal behaviors (Teng & Gordon, 2021). Some states implement basic education programs alongside vocational training when attempting to rehabilitate prisoners

as a way to increase their chances of successful integration into society and reduce the risk of their re-offending upon release (Mohammed & Wan Mohamed, 2015).

Several studies supported that education addresses issues/factors that lead prisoners to engage in criminal behavior. For example, the findings in the RAND Corporation report showed that education and vocational training improved the odds of getting employment opportunities after release and enhance the chances of offenders not re-offending after release (Davis et al., 2013). Consistent with these findings by Davis et al. (2013), Nally et al. (2014) found educational illiteracy combined with a lack of interpersonal skills and jobs as significant factors that could be responsible for higher recidivism rates among the 708,677 offenders released from federal and state prisons in 2010. Essentially, a lack of education often means less employment opportunities, especially for ex-offenders. Further, studies have consistently found a correlation between employment opportunities post-release and recidivism (Duwe, 2017; Mohammed & Wan Mohamed, 2015; Nally et al., 2014). According to Nally et al. higher recidivism is common for offenders with lower education levels because of the limited chances of gaining employment.

Nevertheless, there is the question of whether these academic and vocational programs work in helping offenders released from prisons/jails re-enter society and successfully desist from re-offending. Previous studies have raised this question about correctional education programs' ability to lower recidivism in incarcerated individuals, and most indicated that post-release, offenders lack the ability to obtain employment (Nally et al., 2014). In contrast, some quantitative studies found statistically insignificant relationships between correctional education programs and recidivism because the ex-offender's ability to gain employment after release depended on other factors such as criminal history checks and prevailing economic factors (Nally et al., 2014).

A wealth of empirical literature exists on correctional education programs. When examined, the literature on incarceration and recidivism rates reflects women's experiences in correctional institutions are different from their male counterparts, possibly because they have fewer educational programs (Huebner et al., 2010). However, limited research exists on the incarcerated women's perspectives of correctional education programs. Insight from incarcerated women can provide some explanation of why some individuals participate in correctional programs, and some do not, which in turn, may help increase understanding on the best ways to assist in their reintegration. The gap in the literature indicated a need to understand women's experience in correctional education programs. This study sought to investigate the value of correctional education programs for women through the lived experiences, and perspectives, of formerly incarcerated women.

Problem Statement

The problem that this study aimed to address is that there has been a consistent rise in the number of incarcerated women in recent years, largely due to recidivism (Bell et al., 2019). According to Sawyer and Wagner (2019), men's prison admissions decreased by 26% since 2008, while women's incarceration rose, both in total and as a percentage of all prison inmates. Previously one in ten in 1983, women now account for almost one-fourth of all prison admissions. Since 1970, the percentage of women incarcerated in the United States has more than doubled, rising from less than 8,000 offenders in 1970 to over 110,000 offenders in 2013 (Sawyer & Wagner 2019). These statistics show a significant rise in the women prison population, the intended target of this study (Huebner et al., 2010; Ramakers et al., 2017).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics showed that 60% of female detainees were rearrested after being released from prison; and 40% were rearrested for new crimes (Collica-Cox, 2016).

Huebner et al. (2010) showed that 58% of formerly incarcerated women were recaptured, 38% were reconvicted, and 30% ended up in jail following three years after their parole. The high recidivism among women offenders can be associated with several factors such as medical or mental health conditions, drug/substance abuse, inadequate education, homelessness, unemployment and criminal history (Huebner et al. 2010). To this end, these statistics indicated that further research may be needed to determine what factors play a role in influencing the post-release behavior of formerly incarcerated women. I sought to establish correctional education programs as one such factor.

As mentioned earlier, studies have associated correctional education programs with reduced recidivism rates by furnishing offenders with skills and training that empowers them to more successfully reintegrate into society and find employment (Esperian, 2010; Hall, 2015; Pompoco et al., 2017; Vandala, 2019). But, given the high recidivism rates in women offenders, the value of correctional educational programs with female prisoners is unclear. Some reports suggested that federal and state prisons for women do not meet the demand of providing the necessary educational and vocational training programs. For example, female correctional institutions generally do not offer some of the specialized programs available in male prisons (Sultan & Myrent, 2020). In states where training is offered in women's prisons, the training is typically limited to stereotypical occupations like preschool and kindergarten teachers, secretaries and administrative assistants, and/or childcare workers (Huebner et al. 2010). By limiting education programs to traditionally female occupations, women have a harder time finding employment in other sectors after being released from prison. Subsequently, the inability to find gainful employment increases the likelihood to re-offend (Huebner et al., 2010). Given that, it is critical to examine whether the implemented correctional education programs in

women's facilities offer skills and knowledge that will enable employment, a protective factor for reducing recidivism.

Recidivism is linked to criminogenic requirements. According to Wooditch et al. (2014) drug use, antisocial companions, antisocial cognition and strengthening familial and marital ties, are all criminogenic requirements that must be sufficiently addressed to reduce crime. Some studies also suggested that because education and employment are moderate risk factors for re-offending for released prisoners, it is illogical to expect remedial instruction projects to create a considerable decrease in recidivism (Bushway & Apel, 2012; Farabee et al., 2014; Ramakers et al., 2017). Utilizing longitudinal information from offenders in the Netherlands, Ramakers et al. (2017) found that employment availability or unavailability did not reduce the risk of offenders' recidivism. However, they also noted that occupation level reduced the probability of re-offending. Obtaining a respected job in a higher-level position, such as working in real estate, reduced recidivism because it satisfied ex-prisoners' desires and needs. Thus, the ability to gain employment opportunities seemed to stimulate offenders to desist from engaging in criminal behaviors (Ramakers et al., 2017).

In contrast, some studies have reported earning a GED or post-secondary education does not affect recidivism (Bell et al., 2019; Cho & Tyler, 2013). In their comprehensive research, Bell et al. (2019) found that offenders, both male and female, who obtained a GED while imprisoned, had lower recidivism rates than those who finished vocational training while in prison. According to their study, Cho and Tyler (2013) concluded that giving primary education to male criminals in Florida prisons increased their employment rates but did not decrease their recidivism rates. These findings were based on administrative data obtained from several correctional sources.

Similar results were reported in a quasi-experimental study conducted by Duwe and Clark (2014), which explored the effects of instruction programs on work results and recidivism rates among detainees. The study looked at differences between prisoners who earned GEDs or post-secondary qualifications while incarcerated and those who did not. According to the findings of Duwe and Clark, obtaining a GED improved a person's odds of finding work after being released from prison. Still, having a GED had no impact on the probability of committing a felony offense again, whereas training in post-secondary education while in jail had a substantial effect on job prospects as well as recidivism rates (Duwe & Clark, 2014).

The mixed findings about the effectiveness of different correctional education programs for offenders in prisons on recidivism rates suggested a need for further study. A nationwide study of state-level custodial administration, local, and state correctional facility managers, along with executives of correctional programs for women, was sponsored by the Nationwide Institute of Justice in 1993 and 1994 (Hine, 2019). Hine (2019) found that, though there were 242 projects in all, only a few states had innovative ideas. Work programs in prisons included job training, prison enterprises, and other things connected to employment. There were 48 curricula in all, with half being classified as job training. Further research is needed due to mixed findings on the effectiveness of correctional education programs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of formerly incarcerated women on correctional education programs. In this study, the researcher examined the value of correctional education programs in helping formerly incarcerated women reduce the likelihood of recidivism post-release. No study has examined the value of correctional education programs in assisting formerly incarcerated women in avoiding recidivism in New

York State. This study sought to fill that void by exploring this relationship from the lived experiences, and perspectives of formerly incarcerated women. The particular focus was to better understand the value of the correctional education programs offered to women prisoners while incarcerated in New York State jails and prisons. The researcher examined individuals who have benefitted from programs that facilitate adult basic education, general education development certifications, life-skills training, vocational and technical training, and higher education.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the theoretical framework is based on self-determination theory. Self-determination theory explains that human motivation, achievement, and well-being in different settings depends on the fulfillment of psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

As stated, self-determination theory looks at the fulfillment of psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Manger et al., 2020). Autonomy refers to the need to control one's circumstances and actions (Manger et al., 2020). According to Manger et al. (2020), competence entails one's desire to develop skills and improve their potential or capabilities. Relatedness refers to the desire to establish a satisfying connection with other people (Manger et al., 2020; McKinnery & Cotronea, 2011). Self-determination theory also identifies different motivations that influence the fulfillment of human psychological needs: autonomous motivation and controlled motivation (Manger et al., 2020; McKinney & Cotronea, 2011).

Manger et al. (2020) indicated that intrinsic motivation occurs when people experience autonomous motivation by exercising choice to engage in a behavior, and when the behavior is personally important to them. Conversely, when individuals feel that external forces such as threats and rewards influence their behavior, they experience controlled motivation such as

extrinsic motivation (Manger et al., 2020). To that end, Self-determination theory (SDT) posits that there are different types of extrinsic motivation depending on whether individuals experience them as autonomous or controlling (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Manger et al., 2020).

The first type of extrinsic motivation is external regulation, which is the least autonomous as individual act solely because of external factors like earning rewards (Manger et al., 2020).

The second type of extrinsic motivation is introjected regulation, which is rather controlled regulation because individuals engage in behaviors to avoid disapproval or to feel pride (Manger et al., 2020). The third type is identified regulation in which individuals engage in the behavior because they voluntarily accept the value of behavior and its significance to their life or future (Manger et al., 2020). Integrated regulation means that individuals engage in the behavior because they consider them to be an integral part of their lifestyle pattern (Manger et al., 2020). Lastly, SDT suggests that individuals can lack motivation (amotivation) to engage in behavior which is associated with unappealing tasks and perceived as low value (Manger et al., 2020).

These concepts are important to the proposed study, in which I sought to examine the reasons or objectives that women may have for participating in correctional education programs. It is expected that women participate in correctional education programs to achieve certain objectives (an extrinsic motivation) or the value of skills and certification from the programs upon release. To that end, Manger et al. (2020) suggested that the motive for prisoners to participate in correctional education programs is based on the desire to cope with post-release life.

Research Questions

The study investigated the value of correctional education programs through the lived experiences, and perspectives, of formerly incarcerated women in New York state. For this

study, New York state was selected because it has demonstrated strong support of enhancing education programs for prisoners. For example, in 2014, the state of New York vowed to provide college-level education at ten state prisons (Craft et al., 2019). Thus, their commitment makes them an appropriate candidate for this study.

In completing this study, the following research questions were used to explore the value of correctional education programs through the lived experiences and perspectives of formerly incarcerated women:

1. What were the experiences, and perspectives of formerly incarcerated women with correctional education programs?
2. What were the motivating factors that influenced formerly incarcerated women to participate in correctional education programs?
3. How do formerly incarcerated women believe their participation in correctional education programs influenced their post-release behavior and choices?

Research Gap and Significance of the Study

Approximately 740,000 women are presently detained in prisons across the globe as the number of women in prison rises (Fair & Walmsley, n.d.). Women prisoners often have poor educational backgrounds when they enter prison, and educational programming is seldom prioritized (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2018). Women's social and economic empowerment is aided by education, and providing appropriate education is likely to help them overcome some of the challenges they face upon being released from incarceration (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2018).

This study expands the scholarly literature on the effect of remedial schooling programs on recidivism rates among women. The findings provide new insight into the criminal equity framework to encourage government and state women's correctional facilities to offer instructive

opportunities that prepare offenders for a more successful reintegration into society. The findings of this research may also serve as an important source of information for federal and state policymakers, helping them to identify the most effective correctional education programs for incarcerated women. This will ultimately help in reducing the rate of recidivism among incarcerated individuals, as it is expected that the effectiveness of corrective education programs in reducing recidivism rates varies based on the type of program implemented.

The findings could also affect policy, such as increased investment in correctional education. Post-secondary programs in federal and state women's prisons, though costly, can produce significant benefits by reducing the likelihood of formerly incarcerated women recidivating. Post-secondary programs enable offenders to be more employable upon release. Providing employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated women can significantly reduce the rate of recidivism and ultimately decrease the burden on the criminal justice system.

Summary

The number of women in the criminal justice system is increasing at a faster rate than men in federal and state prisons, county jails, and detention centers (Huebner et al., 2010; Sultan & Myrent, 2020). The rise in women incarceration rates in the United States raises questions about the effectiveness of correctional education programs such as primary education, vocational training, and post-secondary education (Huebner et al., 2010; Ramakers et al., 2017). Studies suggested that correctional education programs can reduce recidivism rates among prisoners by addressing risk factors for recidivism (Huebner et al., 2010; Ramakers et al., 2017). This study aimed to explore the experiences, and perspectives, of formerly incarcerated women on the value of correctional education programs in improving their post-release behavior and choices. Chapter 2 presents a review of the scholarly literature associated with this research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences, and perspectives of correctional education programs from formerly incarcerated women. Chapter 2 presents the literature review for this study. This chapter begins with an overview of adult prisoners. The chapter then discusses the purpose, value, and outcomes of adult correctional education programs within six sections and identifies gaps in the existing studies. The chapter ends by summarizing the existing literature and gaps in the published studies on the value of adult correctional programs, particularly higher education programs.

Overview of Adult Prisoners

The number of Americans in correctional facilities in the United States has reached record levels based on the latest statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice. The total prison population domestically was 1,465,200 (Carson, 2020). The incarceration rate for 2018 was 432 prisoners per 100,000 U.S. citizens (Carson, 2020). According to Carson (2020), the incarceration rate declined by 3% in 2019 to 419 prisoners per 100,000 U.S. citizens. At the end of 2020, 2 million people were in U.S. prisons and jails, representing a 500% growth in the prison population over the last 40 years. Although, the two million people held represents a significant annual decline of the prison population from 2.1 million in 2019. The high rates of incarceration began in 2008 when U.S. incarceration peaked at 2.3 million (Kang-Brown et al., 2021).

Adult Male and Female Prisoners

Of the two million prison population in the United States in 2020, 93% were male prisoners, and 7.6% were females (Carson, 2020). However, the number of male and female prisoners in both federal and state prisons has slightly declined. Specifically, male prisoners have

declined by 11.9% from 1,502,002 in 2009 to 1,322,850 in 2019 (Carson, 2020). At the end of 2019, the federal and state prisons held more than 1% of all African and Hispanic males aged 20–64 years in the United States (Carson, 2020). Similarly, although the female prison population declined by 4.9%, from 113,485 in 2009 to 107,955 in 2019, the population of adult male prisoners has declined by more than twice the rate of female prisoners and the incarceration rate was higher for black and Hispanic females than white females (Carson, 2020).

The Federal Bureau of Prisons statistics indicated that male and female prisoners have been declining in the United States since 2008 when the U.S. incarcerated rate peaked, despite noting the rate of incarcerated women spiked from less than 8,000 in 1970 to over 110,000 in 2013. However, Carson (2020) indicates the main reason for the differences in the declining rate between male and female prisoners is that 21 states now have higher incarceration rates for females than the national average compared to seven states with higher male incarceration rates than the national rate.

Statistical evidence showed that 700,000 people leave prisons in the U.S. yearly, but 40% of them are arrested within three years after release (Davis et al., 2014). A ten-year cohort-based study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics showed that recidivism among ex-offenders released from prisons in 2008 remains high (Antenangeli & Durose, 2021). The study found that among the prisoners released in 2008 from state prisons, 43% of them were rearrested within the first year of their release. Moreover, 44% of male ex-offenders were rearrested within the first year of release compared to 34% of female ex-offenders (Antenangeli & Durose, 2021). At the end of ten years, the recidivism gap between male and female ex-offenders narrowed, as 83% male and 76% female ex-offenders were rearrested across 24 states. The overall recidivism rate across the 24 states at the end of the ten-year study period was 82% (Antenangeli & Durose, 2021). The

study concluded that high recidivism among male and female prisoners in the United States has yet to promote the successful reintegration of ex-offenders into society. The high rate also indicated that prisons do not achieve their rehabilitation goal, one of the major goals of the criminal justice system (Koos, 2015).

Availability of Correctional Education Programs

Studies associate high recidivism rates among ex-offenders with various factors. Among them is the availability of correctional education programs. A study by the RAND Corporation blamed the recidivism rates on a lack of knowledge and skills needed to support their reintegration into society (Davis et al., 2014). Studies supported the relationship between the lack of education and recidivism because incarcerated people have lower educational attainment and literacy levels than the general population (Craft et al., 2019, Davis et al., 2014). A report by the Rockefeller Institute stated that the biggest percentage of America's incarcerated population is dramatically undereducated (Craft et al., 2019). The report also showed that only 46% of America's inmates have a high school education or equivalent (Craft et al., 2019). Only 23% of the incarcerated population has a college-level education compared to the 48% of the general population (Craft et al., 2019; Miller, 2021).

Given that incarcerated inmates tend to have less formal education, scholars have supported the practice of providing correctional education to equip prisoners with skills necessary to facilitate their successful return to communities (Craft et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2014; Messemer, 2011). This option is based on empirical studies that have stressed a strong connection between education attainment levels and criminal behavior (Craft et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2014). The findings from these studies have shown that participation in correctional education programs provides benefits in post-release, and thus led to major policy changes. Specifically, the U.S.

government lifted the ban on Pell Grants to improve inmates' access to in-prison college-level education programs (Chesnut & Wachendorfer, 2021). Due to this effort by the U.S. government at the national level to expand access to in-prison higher education to offenders, it is vital to provide correctional stakeholders and policymakers with a detailed examination of the effectiveness of the adult correctional program in rehabilitating offenders.

Historical Overview of Education as Prison Reform

The history of adult correctional education programs domestically can be traced several years back in 1789 when clergyman William Rogers introduced lessons at the Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia (Davies et al., 2014; Messemer, 2011). According to Messemer (2011), the first correctional education program called "*Sabbath school*" offered inmates religious and moral lessons to read the Bible. The early correctional education programs were literacy-focused because they aimed to teach inmates how to read the Bible and comprehend it (Messemer, 2011). But from 1826 to 1840, the correctional education programs expanded to math, reading, geography, and writing (Messemer, 2011).

The adult correctional education programs curriculum expanded throughout the United States as the prisoners were required to enroll in vocational and educational programs while incarcerated (Messemer, 2011). Davis et al. (2014) explains that the educational programs in prisons were based on the rehabilitation philosophy during President Andrew Jackson's administration. From 1824 to 1837, Americans held the view that crime posed a serious threat to social order and stability. The general conviction was that the major rationale of punishment was rehabilitation to change the behavior of inmates (Davis et al., 2014). The rationale of rehabilitation became an overriding factor in the implementation of adult correctional education programs in the United States in the 1960s based on the findings of the "*President's Commission*

on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice report" that prison institutions did little in preparing inmates for successful reentry into society (Davis et al., 2014).

The commission report recommended that all correctional institutions in the United States establish vocational and training programs with instructors. According to Davis et al. (2014), policies like the Adult Education Act of 1966 played a critical role in expanding adult correction educational programs across the United States. They were seen as the essential tools for successful rehabilitation. Vocational training, adult basic education, GED, and postsecondary education programs were offered in the 1970s (Davis et al., 2014). State prisons began to offer postsecondary programs to prisoners in the 1970s after surveys established that earlier college prison programs in Illinois and Texas reduced recidivism (Messemer, 2011).

Pell Grants

The launch of the Federal Pell Grants marked the golden era of adult correctional education that became accessible to qualified inmate students. The issuance of Pell grants through the Higher Education Act of 1965 helped prisoners to pay for postsecondary education (Custer, 2021; Davis et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2019). In the report about postsecondary education programs in prisons, Wilson et al. (2019) suggested that the Pell Grants made higher education institutions develop special programs to enroll inmates eligible to receive Pell Grants. These programs allowed prisoners the ability to afford postsecondary education while incarcerated (Wilson et al., 2019). Once Pell Grants became accessible to prisoners, postsecondary programs increased dramatically from 12 programs in 1965 to 350 programs in 1982. At the same time, about 27,000 prisoners enrolled in the college programs offered in prisons in 1972 (Custer, 2021).

The college correctional education programs did not appear until after short-lived laws passed by Congress from 1992 to 1994 that were based on the *nothing works* condemnation of

correctional education programs (Messemer, 2011). During this period, however, prisoners were denied access to correctional education programs aimed at rehabilitation. The tough-on-crime law shifted the focus of prison from rehabilitation goals to punishment and incapacitation (Forman & Widmer, 2017). Messemer (2011) indicated that the *nothing works* indictment infiltrated correctional education programs not because research proved the programs to be ineffective, but rather citing the rehabilitation model was poorly developed. Congress in 1992 passed higher education amendments marking the first denial of eligibility to Pell Grants to prisoners on death row and those serving life sentences (Craft et al., 2019; Custer, 2021). The final rollback on eligibility to Pell Grants by inmates came in 1994.

According to Wilson et al. (2019), the era of postsecondary education for incarcerated people ended in 1994 with the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act that eliminated the eligibility of Pell Grants to incarcerated students in both state and federal prisons (Davis et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2019). The ban on prisoners' eligibility to Pell Grants negatively impacted access to a college education. Within one year after eliminating access to higher education, participation in college-level correctional education programs declined by 44% (Custer, 2021; Davis et al., 2014). The elimination suggests that the once-growing higher education programs for prisoners rapidly declined. In addition, higher education enrollments by prisoners declined from 7.3% in 1994 to around 3.8% in 1998 (Custer, 2021). This decline suggests that the crime control bill had disastrous effects on correctional higher education programs in the federal and state prisons in the United States. Many prisoners could not access financial aid to cover costs to attend college, thereby leaving most of them without an opportunity to pursue higher education. Even though correctional higher education programs fell dramatically after implementing the new crime law, some prisoners still had access to college

correctional education through privately sponsored programs (Craft et al., 2019). Access to college in prison programs was now dependent on whether prisoners were housed in privately funded institutions that offered such programs, which often had limited spots (Craft et al., 2019).

Prior to these policy bans that restricted access to education by prisoners, the availability of correctional education for incarcerated individuals were growing. However, policies such as the Adult Education Act of 1966 and the use of Pell Grants resulted in significant reductions due to these bans on Pell Grants. Despite the bans, numerous private and public universities and colleges continued to offer postsecondary education in New York State (Craft et al., 2019). Adult correctional education began to shift again in 2015 due to an interest in providing inmates with postsecondary education in prisons.

The Pell Grant opportunities returned in 2015 following the growing support for better reentry approaches and other strategies to lower recidivism by enhancing inmates' access to higher education (SpearIt, 2016). The U.S. Department of Education announced the pilot program for the Second Chance of Pell Grant program to determine whether the availability of financial aid to inmates increases participation in higher education programs and to help inmates get jobs after release (SpearIt, 2016; Wilson et al., 2019). The objective of the pilot program, which ran from 2016 to 2020, and involving 67 universities and colleges, was to track inmates after release to collect reliable data on recidivism rates (SpearIt, 2016; Wilson et al., 2019). The pilot program was based on the results of previous studies, such as that of the 2013 Rand Corporation that found that inmates who enrolled in higher education programs were 43% less likely to be rearrested after release than those who did not participate in any education program (Burke, 2021).

Burke (2021) reported that the pilot program's results encouraged Congress to pass the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, thereby permanently lifting the ban on the Pell Grant program. The lifted ban led to an initial expansion of access to 130 colleges across 42 states, allowing over 22,117 inmates to enroll in postsecondary correctional education (Chesnut & Wachendorfer, 2021). In a Vera Institute survey, Chesnut and Wachendorfer (2021) found that at least 7,000 inmates have earned associates and bachelor's degrees or technical and career certificates since the launch of the Second Chance Pell grants. The increase suggests that Second Chance Pell Grants for inmates help expand access to higher education to the prison population. To that end, the restoration of Pell Grants has allowed more universities and colleges to provide inmates with in-prison college education programs.

Adult Correctional Education Programs

The adult correctional education programs offered to incarcerated individuals are adult basic education, secondary education, general education development (GED), vocational education and postsecondary education (Bozick et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2014; Rampey et al., 2016). There are 32 states that offer adult secondary education and postsecondary education to inmates (Davis et al., 2014). A meta-analysis survey by the Rand Corporation found that most federal and state prisons offer basic education, secondary education programs, vocational and postsecondary education programs (Bozick et al., 2018). However, the Rand Corporation survey found that only 6% of the incarcerated individuals participated in postsecondary education programs (Bozick et al., 2018). According to a 2016 survey by the Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), inmates' most preferred adult correctional educational programs are the certificates from college, as 29% of the inmates surveyed indicated they wanted to enroll in them (Rampey et al., 2016). The next most preferred adult correctional

educational programs were high school diplomas, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees (Rampey et al., 2016). Results from this survey indicated that incarcerated adults wanted to enroll in an academic class or program to increase their knowledge or skills in a subject that interests them (Rampey et al., 2016).

Higher Education Programs

Recent reports have found that higher education/college programs are being offered more than ever in United States prisons (Davis & Linton, 2021; Royer et al., 2020). A RAND report showed that both four-year universities and community colleges offer in-prison college programs (Davis & Linton, 2021). The Alliance for Higher Education in Prison survey found that community colleges and universities offered 300 higher education programs in federal and state prisons from 2018 to 2019 (Royer et al., 2020). According to Royer et al. (2020), most programs were founded within the past decade. The significant growth in educational programs can be linked to the Second Chance Pell Experimental Initiative that led to the establishment of 22 new higher education programs in prisons in 2016 (Royer et al., 2020). Most of these higher education programs are affiliated with 354 public and private two-year and four-year academic institutions (Royer et al., 2020).

The survey results showed that the distribution of higher education programs varies across the United States because, in some states, community colleges provide coursework in the prisons online that have not established prison education projects with the learning institutions. In other states, prisons had distinct higher education programs. Notably, there were no higher education prison programs in three states: Montana, Delaware, and Kentucky (Royer et al., 2020). Among the total programs surveyed, 106 out of 300 were found in the South, 83 in the Western States, 59 in the Midwest, and 52 in the Northeast (Royer et al., 2020). The survey

results indicated that inmates incarcerated in some states are unable to access higher education programs in their prisons or jails.

A survey by Royer et al. (2020) found that 119 of the programs offered prisoners with degree pathways; 95 and 39 college programs offered associate degree and bachelor's degree pathways, respectively. Only six higher education programs offered master's degree pathways. The remaining programs provided certificate pathways such as postsecondary, career, technical education (CTE) coursework, and vocational certificates (Royer et al., 2020). The survey also found that most higher education programs (93.2%) offered credential pathways at male-designated prisons. In contrast, less than half (44.9%) of the programs provided credential pathways at the female-designated prisons, with only 6.8% of them operating solely at the female prisons (Royer et al., 2020). Thus, these survey results showed that higher education programs are more likely to target male prisons than female prisons in the United States.

In both male and female prisons, higher education programs are offered in-person/on-site and remotely. Royer et al. (2020) found that 86.2% of higher education programs for prison are offered face-to-face, and 15 programs combine remote and face-to-face instruction. Remote instruction was offered online or broadcast to inmates in their facilities (Royer et al., 2020). This indicates that higher education programs depend on supportive services such as computer labs, study halls, tutors, academic libraries, and teaching assistants (Davis & Linton, 2021). The PIAAC survey report found that access to supporting services such as library services for incarcerated individuals influences the effectiveness of the correctional education programs. For example, the PIAAC report shows that incarcerated individuals with access to library services had higher numeracy and literacy scores than those without library services (Rampey et al., 2016). Moreover, the PIAAC report investigation of why incarcerated individuals did not enroll

in higher education found that 27% of the adult incarcerated people indicated that the programs offered at their facilities were not valuable to them (Rampey et al., 2016).

Benefits of Correctional Education Programs

There are many benefits to correctional education programs, both for the inmates and for society at large. Correctional education was primarily offered to facilitate rehabilitation for inmates. This effort started in 1834, when correctional education programs were expanded, for rehabilitation purposes. A significant indicator of rehabilitation is the cessation of criminal activity by individuals after release. According to Bozick et al. (2018), correctional education programs were aimed to address criminogenic need factors, particularly antisocial behavior that also impacted other environments, including school and work. Bozick et al. added that criminogenic risk factors, if reduced, diminished the chances of individuals engaging in criminal behaviors. This helped explain supporters of adult correctional education that emphasized how education programs offered to incarcerated people helped to reeducate them and correct their bad thought behaviors.

It is common for scholarly studies to use recidivism rates to measure the rehabilitative value of adult correctional education programs. In doing so, these studies emphasize that the overriding benefit of correctional education programs is rehabilitating and reducing recidivism rates (Bozick et al., 2018; Seigafo, 2017). Studies by Seigafo (2017), Mohammed and Wan Mohamed (2015), and Quan-Baffour and Zawada (2012), among others, highlight additional values of correctional education programs. These values focus on improving the quality of life, employability, and cost-savings.

Quality of Life. In a study of the United States correctional system, Seigafo (2017) observed that offering vocational and postsecondary education programs to rehabilitate incarcerated individuals prepares them for a better life upon release and helps to promote their

reintegration into society. [The study showed that when rehabilitation programs are coupled with Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), prisoners have a lower likelihood of re-offending and returning to crime. It is suggested that CBT teaches prisoners to cultivate positive thinking process to eliminate their criminal behavior. By showing prisoners how to interact more with the world outside of their incarceration, we can help them increase their understanding of the outside world and improve their behavior.

Most incarcerated individuals are interested in correctional education programs to improve their educational attainment, numeracy, and literacy levels (Rampey et al., 2016). According to the PIAAC report, two-thirds of the adults in federal and state prisons reported their interest in enrolling in academic programs that include general educational development (GED), pre-associated education, trade school, and associate's/bachelor's degrees (Rampey et al., 2016). This report suggests that the adult prison population enrolls in different correctional education programs to acquire skills to help them post-release. Some colleges clearly outline the purpose of their college-based education programs for inmates. For example, McCorkel and DeFina (2019) noted that one of the main values of the undergraduate degree program offered by Villanova University to inmates in Graterford state prison is to provide inmates with skills to engage in critical thinking analysis and rational discourse.

Employment. Another value of adult correctional education programs is to equip incarcerated individuals with skills to gain employment post-release. Studies by Mohammad and Wan Mohammed (2015), as well as the U.S. PIACC showed positive outcomes related to employment. In a meta-analysis study examining the connection between vocational education and recidivism, Mohammed and Wan Mohamed (2015) found that vocational training improves the likelihood of obtaining employment after release. Research has found that adult correctional

education programs also improve incarcerated individuals academic, technical, literacy, and numeracy skills to improve job opportunities post-release (Mohammed & Wan Mohamed, 2015). Similarly, a survey by the U.S. PIAAC found that 41% of the incarcerated adults enrolled in academic programs, such as certificate or degree programs, increased their knowledge and skills in areas of interest to them (Rampey et al., 2016). Another 47% indicated future job considerations as the main reason and 39% said to increase the chances of getting a job upon release was why they enrolled in adult correctional education programs (Rampey et al., 2016).

Quan-Baffour and Zawada (2012) observed similar results in a qualitative study examining the value of correctional education programs in terms of employment, social cohesion, and recidivism. In an interview with educators and formerly incarcerated individuals from Gauteng prison in South Africa, Quan-Baffour and Zawada found that incarcerated individual enrolled in vocational programs, high school, and postsecondary programs felt they were equipped with skills to engage in employment activities post-release. The study concluded that the ability to secure employment is a major contributor to the successful reintegration of incarcerated individuals into society.

The value of correctional education programs in equipping prisoners with knowledge and skills is based on current reports that most people in the U.S. prison population have low education attainment, which affects their reintegration post-release (Davis, 2019). Specifically, the findings from a survey on the literacy and numeracy skills among incarcerated individual by the PIAAC reported that a large percentage of federal and state incarcerated individuals have lower educational attainments compared to the general U.S. population (Davis, 2019). The 2016 PIAAC survey showed that 30% of the U.S. prison population does not have a high school diploma or GED (Davis, 2019; Rampey et al., 2016). The PIAAC survey report also showed that

incarcerated adults have lower literacy and numeracy levels than the U.S. population (Davis, 2019; Rampey et al., 2016).

Cost Savings. The potential of cost savings is cited as another reason for providing uneducated inmates with correctional education. The cost-saving explanation is supported by different reports showing that the United States uses adult correctional education programs to address the spiraling cost of housing inmates in federal and state prisons (Bushway & Kalra, 2021; Davis, 2019). According to the RAND Corporation report, the United States spends billions of dollars on federal and state prisons. Jails as the corrections expenditure quadrupled from \$20 billion in 1980 to \$80 billion in 2010 because of crime-punishment policies of the 1990s (Bushway & Kalra, 2021). A report on the correctional expense in Massachusetts showed that the 'get tough on crime' philosophy made the correctional agencies shift their focus from rehabilitation to punishment and incapacitation (Forman & Widmer, 2017).

But the focus became counterproductive as the incarceration rate increased significantly, and without access to education services following the ban on Pell Grants, recidivism was high. Some states, such as Massachusetts, reported high recidivism rates; two-thirds of all inmates in the state and county correctional facilities recidivate within years of release (Forman & Widmer, 2017). The high recidivism rate in Massachusetts is responsible for the growing correctional budget in a state that spends \$1 billion each year on correctional facilities (Forman & Widmer, 2017). The state correctional budget for the Department of Correction and Sheriffs rose by \$181 million from \$1 billion in 2011 to \$1.2 billion in 2016 (Forman & Widmer, 2017). The growing correctional expenditure has prompted various stakeholders to call for correctional facilities to consider evidence-based strategies such as higher education programs to reduce recidivism rates and the associated costs.

Studies have suggested that higher education programs offered to incarcerated individuals are a potential solution to the growing prison costs for federal and state governments (Davis et al., 2019). A RAND Corporation costs analysis of re-incarceration and correctional education programs found the latter to be cost-effective (Davis, 2019; Davis et al., 2013). The RAND survey examined the direct costs of incarceration and correctional education programs. According to Davis et al. (2013), the survey found the three-year re-incarceration rate for a sample of 100 incarcerated individuals who did not participate in the correctional education programs would be \$2.9–\$3.2 million. Conversely, the study found re-incarceration costs for incarcerated individuals who participated in the correctional education programs would be \$2.1–\$2.3 million (Davis et al., 2013).

The survey results also suggested that correctional education programs reduce recidivism rates for former incarcerated men and women three years post-release. The RAND study indicated that correctional education programs help ensure that formerly incarcerated individuals do not return to prison three years post-release, thus reducing the spiraling costs of housing people in federal and state prisons. Providing higher education to incarcerated individuals is also a cost-effective way of reducing the prison population and expenditure by lowering recidivism rates.

Overall, the evidence from reports reviewed shows that the value of adult correctional educational programs is primarily limited to rehabilitation, recidivism, employment, and addressing the high costs of housing incarcerated individuals. This suggests that the justification for offering education revolves around promoting formerly incarcerated individuals' participation in the economy and successful reentry into society. However, the evidence is only suggestive since these studies also have methodological limitations. For example, the PIAAC report used a

nationally representative sample of incarcerated individuals from February to June 2014. The social desirability associated with surveys presents a threat to the validity of results. Moreover, the cost-saving rationale of adult correctional programs reported by Davis et al. (2013) is just a conservative estimate since the study does not consider such other costs as the financial and emotional costs to those who could have been victims of future crimes caused by recidivating formerly incarcerated people.

Barriers to Correctional Education Programs

It was expected that restoring access to Pell Grants to incarcerated individuals would result in more incarcerated individuals accessing the correctional education programs, but several factors limited participation. The PIAAC reported that while most of the incarcerated adults are interested in enrolling in various correctional education programs, few of them participate in those programs because of multiple factors or barriers. (Brosens et al., 2015; Rampey et al., 2016). Several researchers that have explored barriers to prisoners' participation in adult correctional programs have found that inmates do not participate in the program because of individual, situational, and institutional barriers (Brosens et al., 2015; Rampey et al., 2016).

Individual Barriers: Despite the clear benefits of correctional education, some eligible incarcerated individuals do not enroll in the education programs. The PIAAC survey report found that only 21% of incarcerated individuals were enrolled in correctional education, yet 70% of incarcerated individuals were interested in enrolling in academic programs offered in prison (Rampey et al., 2016). The individual barriers have been cited as reasons for this gap (Brosens et al., 2015). Individual barriers are inmates' psychosocial barriers, beliefs, and attitudes that obstruct their enrollment and participation in correctional education programs. According to Brosens et al. (2015) individual barriers are also called attitudinal barriers because they involve a

lack of interest in educational programs. Among the incarcerated individuals who wanted to join academic programs, 25% were on the waiting list for the programs for their desired program (Rampey et al., 2016).

There is a connection between factors unique to incarcerated individuals and those that are beyond the control of the prison or the individual's amotivation (Manger et al., 2020). These factors include preexisting educational attainment, situational conditions, and finances.

Situational Barriers. A study of barriers to participation in correctional education programs among incarcerated males found situational barriers as one of the major challenges (Kaiser et al., 2020). Kaiser et al. (2020) found that many of the incarcerated individuals did not enroll in the correctional educational programs because of their lengthy sentences. For example, those serving life were not eligible to participate in the education programs. Moreover, the study found that incarcerated individuals were restricted from enrolling in some adult correctional education programs due to their charges or type of crime committed (Kaiser et al., 2021). Consistently, a study by the Rockefeller Institute on college education programs offered to incarcerated individuals in New York found that even though over 50% of the prison population were eligible for recruitment to different college programs (Craft et al., 2019). Most of the prisoners were restricted from participation because of education being withheld as a form of discipline for breaking prison rules and issues related to their criminal charges (Craft et al., 2019).

Prison transfers are another situational barrier that hinders participation in correctional education programs. According to Brosens et al. (2015), incarcerated individuals are commonly transferred from one correctional facility to another in the federal or state prison systems. Prisoners are transferred from one facility to another because of security reclassification or

program participation. The transfers have a negative effect on the ability of incarcerated individuals to participate in the programs, especially if the same programs are not available in the new correctional facility where they are being transferred (Brosens et al., 2015).

Institutional Barriers. Program funding is another barrier associated with an incarcerated individual's amotivation or lack of motivation to participate in postsecondary education programs. The literature reviewed in the history of correctional education programs indicates that from 1994 when Congress eliminated Pell Grants eligibility for incarcerated individuals', access to postsecondary programs by incarcerated individuals declined (Davis et al., 2014; Custer, 2021). Pell Grants represented a significant funding source for incarcerated individuals, which was eliminated in 1994. As reported earlier, Pell Grants' ban led to reduced participation in the few postsecondary programs (Custer, 2021).

The U.S. government's pilot with the Second Chance Pell Grants in some correctional facilities considerably improved inmates' accessibility to postsecondary programs (SpearIt, 2016; Wilson et al., 2019). Current college education programs are supported by public and private funding. Public funding is available to incarcerated individuals through the Pell Grants restored in 2016 (Craft et al., 2019). Although participation in college-based education programs has expanded due to the Second Chance Pell Grants, not all incarcerated individuals are eligible for the funding; it prioritizes participants expected to be released from prison with a period of five years (Craft et al., 2019). These restrictions to funding prevent even eligible incarcerated individuals from enrolling in available education programs.

Self-Determination Theory

One of the reasons highlighted as a barrier for continuing education programs is the lack of motivation by inmates. Self-determination theory offers some explanation for that lack of

motivation. Self-determination theory (SDT) indicates the role of human motivation in school being relevant to incarcerated individuals deciding whether to participate or not in correctional education programs. The theory suggests that achieving human needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is critical for motivation (Kaap-Deeder et al., 2019; Manger et al., 2020). According to Manger et al. (2020), autonomy focuses on an individual's ability to initiate and control their action, competence focuses on the desire to improve or develop one's skills, and relatedness focuses on the desire to establish a bond with peers or others. SDT theory has identified several motivation types that affect the actualization of these basic human needs (Manger et al., 2020). This theory holds that people are autonomously motivated when they have a choice to initiate behavior and when that behavior is personally useful (Manger et al., 2020).

SDT suggests that people can lack motivation being neither intrinsically nor extrinsically motivated. This state is referred to as amotivation (Manger et al., 2020). SDT theory posits that amotivation is associated with low ability, low value, and unappealing tasks (Manger et al., 2020). For this reason, studies have found a relationship between incarcerated individuals lack motivation to enroll in correctional education programs due to low ability and due to lack of financial support or grants that enable incarcerated individuals to enroll in educational programs (Brosens et al., 2015).

Individuals either experience intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation occurs when a person engages in behaviors because it is satisfying, while extrinsic motivation occurs when individuals engage in activity/behavior to obtain an outcome (Manger et al., 2020). In this study, SDT is reflected in that incarcerated individuals engage in correctional education programs because they are either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Incarcerated individuals are often extrinsically motivated to participate in educational programs as an escape

to remove themselves from the day-to-day prison environment. Prisoners, for examples, may participate in educational programs to remove themselves from a less controlled area, such as a housing unit, to a more controlled area, such as a school, to gain a feeling of solace.

The intrinsic motivation for participation in the different programs is formed by reflection of usefulness of gaining skills for their post-release life (Panitsides & Moussiou, 2019).

Essentially, incarcerated individuals may be less motivated to enroll in correctional education programs when they do not see such programs as useful in their life after being released. For example, the PIAAC survey of incarcerated prisoners found that 21% of the incarcerated people who did not want to participate in the education programs indicated that the programs offered in their prisons were not helpful (Rampey et al., 2016).

Overall, the literature supports that although the majority of incarcerated individuals are eligible to receive and attend the various correctional programs, some are amotivated from participating because they view the programs as useless. Based on the SDT theoretical framework, these contextual factors deny incarcerated individuals' meaningful choices of correctional programs that best fit their interest and values. The PIAAC survey of a national representative sample of incarcerated individuals showed that 20% of offenders harbor negative attitudes towards the usefulness of higher education programs offered in prison (Rampey et al., 2016).

Summary

The studies reviewed show that many incarcerated individuals in federal and state prisons are released from prisons after completing their sentences, but 40% are rearrested within three years of release. Notably, 82% of the formerly incarcerated individuals are rearrested within ten years. The high recidivism rates contribute to mass incarceration in the United States.

Further, lower education attainment among the incarcerated population also may contribute to the high recidivism rates. As a viable option to lower recidivism, both federal policies and correctional facilities have enabled inmates the opportunity to participate in correctional education programs to facilitate successful reentry into society.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative study explored the value of correctional education programs from formerly incarcerated women's lived experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints. The study focused on giving a voice to formerly incarcerated women in New York State to shed light on correctional education programs and reintegration. This third chapter begins with a positionality statement and the methods used to gather the sample of participants. The remainder of the chapter elucidates the purpose, research design and approach, research questions, data sampling method, data collection, interview protocol, and the strategies used to ensure trustworthiness, confidentiality, and conformability, along with possible limitations.

Positionality Statement

Having served as a civil servant within a Correctional Department for more than 21 years, I was part of an organization that severely impacted the lives of the undereducated, the economically disadvantaged, and the historically bypassed. As my career evolved from Correction Officer to Deputy Warden, I had the privilege of working in a female facility for more than seven years in various ranks. At the peak of my career, I realized I witnessed the revolving doors of the same people we purport to “correct.” It became apparent that the support systems to affect change were not in place, and many correctional facilities were ill-equipped to address rehabilitation or reintegration issues.

I was inspired to conduct this research as an employee, but I recognized the constraints imposed on me limited my involvement. Yet, the desire to change the system never waned. Now, as a retiree with more than 21 years of correctional experience and a personal witness to the cycle of recidivism amongst women, I understand that reintegration is challenging for formerly

incarcerated women. Nonetheless, to conduct this research, I used my work experience, relevant knowledge, and personal connections with other correctional service agencies to reach participants. I was compelled to do this research and see its findings, as so many discussions on the challenges and barriers faced by this forgotten population have flourished during my career. Transitioning out of law enforcement into this academic study was aligned with my concerns about the value of correctional education programs and whether participation in the programs influenced post-release behavior or choices of formerly incarcerated women.

Research Questions

To determine the value of correctional education programs through the lived experiences, and perspectives, of formerly incarcerated women in New York State, this study used the following research questions:

1. What were the experiences, and perspectives of formerly incarcerated women with correctional education programs?
2. What were the motivating factors that influenced formerly incarcerated women to participate in correctional education programs?
3. How do formerly incarcerated women believe their participation in correctional education programs influenced their post-release behavior and choices?

Research Design and Approach

The researcher used a qualitative methodology in the current research, which allowed me to collect in-depth details about the value of correctional education programs based on the experiences of formerly incarcerated women who desist from recidivism. According to Mohajan (2019), qualitative research is a social action form that stresses how people make sense of and interpret their experiences or understanding of the social reality of individuals. This approach

typically embraces interviews and observations, including case studies, historical and document analyses (Mohajan, 2019). A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because the researcher sought to obtain robust descriptions about the correctional education programs' value on recidivism from formerly incarcerated women's perspectives. The qualitative approach allowed the study to obtain or create true knowledge about the phenomenon by interpreting the views of formerly incarcerated women (Rahi, 2017). In essence, the interpretive research approach guided the study by seeking the explanation of the value of correctional education programs on recidivism from the reference point of formerly incarcerated women who have participated in these programs. This type of effort is aligned with the standard approach for interpretative research (Ponelis, 2015; Rahi, 2017). Further, the interpretivism paradigm focused on building knowledge by understanding participants' viewpoints and the meaning they attach to those views (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

The researcher used the narrative approach to analyze participants' stories to understand whether and how correctional educational programs are helping them desist from re-offending. Researchers often gain knowledge through the narrative approach by analyzing the scripts or texts (Muylaert et al., 2014). Butina (2015) explained that the narrative approach has been used across disciplines to learn about the participants' culture, identity, and lifestyle. It involves inquiries aimed at the experience of individuals using techniques such as interviews that produce a narrative form of data (Butina, 2015).

There are also numerous advantages to utilizing the narrative approach in qualitative research. Firstly, humans have an innate ability to tell stories, making it effortless to extract narratives. Secondly, obtaining comprehensive data is readily achievable as narratives typically

offer detailed descriptions. Lastly, it is feasible to acquire profound insights as participants often divulge their innermost selves through their stories (Butina, 2015).

In this way, the narrative approach was best suited for this study's research topic because unstructured and in-depth interviews allow for a rich collection on the value of correctional education programs that helps formerly incarcerated women desist from recidivism. The advantage of using the narrative approach was a more conventional way of communicating meaningful content or information. It allowed the participants of this study to transmit oral histories of their experiences and personal reflections on correctional education programs.

The researcher did consider using a quantitative method, but this approach was not selected because it would not have allowed the participants' an opportunity to express their personal experiences with correctional education programs in a detailed way. According to Apuke (2017), quantitative research involves collecting and analyzing structured data that can be represented numerically. It focuses on using and analyzing numerical data of specific statistical techniques to answer questions like who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how (Apuke, 2017). Using a quantitative approach could require the participants to complete a questionnaire or survey of predetermined responses, which could then limit the ability to adequately capture the respondents' thoughts, memories, and feelings. Consequently, using the qualitative approach was a preferred method since it provided more direct insight into the participants' personal experiences on the value of correctional education programs.

Research Site

The site for the study was the state of New York, which was selected for being one of the strongest supporters of enhancing education programs for prisoners. In 2014, New York state

vowed to provide college-level education at ten state prisons (Craft et al., 2019). Their commitment made the state an appropriate site for this study.

Population and Sampling

This qualitative study focused on examining the value of correctional education programs on the likelihood of women offenders recidivating, thus the sample of this study are formerly incarcerated women. Davis et al. (2014) concluded that most prisoners upon release reintegrate back into society but are returned into the prison environment within three years after their release. In 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was largely responsible for a decrease in prisoners in state or federal prisons by 214,300 (down 15%) from 2019 and by 399,700 (down 25%) from 2009, the year the number of prisoners in the United States peaked (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021). For this study, the researcher decided to capture the experiences of individuals incarcerated throughout the pandemic.

The inclusion criteria for the study required that a participant be a former prisoner, identified as a woman, have matriculated through a New York prison, and was released in the last five years (2017-2022). The inclusion criteria were selected to specifically investigate whether New York state's 2017 initiative of investing \$7.3 million in college-level education and reentry services under the Criminal Justice Investment Initiative had a positive impact on their reentry outcomes. The study focused on women due to the relatively little empirical research conducted on how correctional education programs impact their post-release behavior. Excluded from this study are men and formerly incarcerated women released prior to 2017 or after 2022.

Non-probability sampling was used to draw a sample that was available because of resources and time constraints. Non-probability sampling is defined as samples that are available to the researcher or selected by the researcher, and only some have chance of being a part of the

sample (Naderifar et al., 2017). Specifically, purposeful sampling was used because it helped to identify and draw an information-rich sample related to the phenomenon being studied (Palinkas et al., 2015). That is, it allowed the selection of formerly incarcerated women with experience related to correctional education programs and recidivism.

Snowball sampling was also used because it is considered an appropriate method to access "difficult and hard-to-reach population," such as people with a criminal history who do not wish to be contacted or found (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). This sampling method allowed the researcher to contact a group of people in correctional departments using them as referrals to reach formerly incarcerated women released between 2017–2022. The researcher's professional contacts with the New York City Department of Correction and the New York State Corrections Department and Community Supervision acted as an initial source of the snowball sample for recruiting through online meetings. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study through screening questions to determine eligibility and consented to participate in the study. The researcher did not encounter difficulty in obtaining referrals, the researcher was able to solicit participants from family members, friends, social media and ask participants to refer their friends.

Sample Size

The sample size for this qualitative study was ten formerly incarcerated women, all previously incarcerated in either a jail or prison in New York State. This sample size in a qualitative study was considered sufficient to achieve saturation and allow an understanding of the events (Vasileiou et al., 2018). According to Vasileiou et al. (2018), the sample size in qualitative studies is influenced by the method, study design, quality of data, and scope of the study. Since the study sought to maximize information, the researcher terminated sampling when new information was not forthcoming from the narrated interviews, that was sampling until the

point of redundancy (Butina, 2015). Overall, the sample size for this study was based on the saturation principle, which is interviewing participants to the point where no new data emerged (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

Ethical Considerations

In this study, the researcher observed the following ethical considerations were made to respect and protect the participants' rights from the potential risk of exposing their identities. The principle of autonomy dictates that researchers respect individuals by giving informed consent to participate in the study, and voluntarily protecting individuals' privacy were key approaches taken in this study to ensure the protection of human subjects (Pace & Livingston, 2005). In this respect, the study's participants were voluntary, and the participants were not coerced. Each participant was required to fill out an informed consent form through Qualtrics or face to face prior to the interview. The informed consent form outlined the purpose of the study, their rights, including voluntary participation status, the right to withdraw anytime without consequences, and the assurance of protection of privacy and confidentiality (Appendix C).

During the interview the researcher reiterated that participation was voluntary, reviewed the demographic questionnaire for clarity and ensured the participant understood the nature of the study and its objective before engaging them in the interview (Appendix D). Finally, the researcher assured participants about their privacy and confidentiality by ensuring that no participant revealed their name or personal identifying information, such as an address, during the interview to ensure they remain anonymous.

Instrumentation

The study used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions. Each interview lasted between 30 to 90 minutes and allowed for the investigating of sensitive information such as

women prisoners' criminal history report. The instrument questions were open-ended to encourage discourse and allowed the participants' time to reflect on their answers. The interview contents were based on the research purpose, questions, and existing literature. The interview questions were organized in the following manner: education and experience prior to incarceration, experiences in correctional education programs, and perceptions of how involvement in education programs influenced post-release behaviors and choices.

Interview Guide

Interviewing is the most common form of data collection, and the semi-structured interview technique is the most frequently used (Kallio et al., 2016). According to Kallio et al. (2016), semi-structured interviews have successfully enabled reciprocity between the interviewer and the participant. With this approach, the researcher was able to guide the participant through a set of sixteen outlined questions to focus the individual's attention on a particular topic to probe a response and capture a specific issue or areas of interest based on their reply (Appendix E). This method allowed a discussion to evolve whereas the researcher and participant were able to explore the topic and expand on the context during the discussion.

The interview guide formed the basis of the study's research questions and conceptual framework. The four chronological segments used to extract the experiences of participants, included:

Background – demographic information and background of schooling before incarceration. Establish background contexts (age, ethnicity, family, education level, number of years incarcerated).

Experiences – What was the experience with correctional education programs while incarcerated? Designed to extract stories of difficulties/barriers (social, academic, financial, length of incarceration) or success in completing a correctional education program.

Response – What were the motivating factors for your involvement in correctional education programs? Stories on the ability to receive resources to help with re-entry support to break the cycle of incarceration.

Introspect – How did the correctional education programs influence their behaviors and choices post-release? Stories illustrating the process of selecting behaviors to desist from criminal activity. When did the participants know to deploy protective factors to remove themselves from negative influences?

Participant Recruitment

The participant recruitment process for this study was done by posting flyers in five halfway houses throughout New York City and Westchester County, and through the use of direct messaging on social media sites. Personal referrals were also used from known individuals familiar with the criminal justice system. Before the initial interview, the researcher either met face-to-face with an individual to present the informed consent document or emailed it to the participant using Qualtrics to obtain the agreement for participation and the demographic survey. After completing the informed consent, the participants set a convenient time for a face-to-face interview or videoconference interview using TEAMS that lasted between 30–90 minutes. The researcher sought to conduct in-depth face-to-face interviews with each of the participants but was unsuccessful due to scheduling conflicts and geographic issues. The researcher conducted a total of twelve interviews—nine face-to-face interviews, which were recorded using an EchoSmartPen 3, and the remaining three interviews were conducted and recorded using TEAMS. Using in-depth interviews helped the researcher to elicit descriptive and explanatory details from each participant.

When the participant answered the final interview question, the researcher thanked the individual for their participation and for providing valuable insight. The researcher also reiterated the terms of the informed consent, and the researcher assured participants about their privacy and confidentiality, indicating that all transcripts and recordings will be destroyed once they are no longer needed. Two participants were excluded from this study as it was discovered during the interviews they were incarcerated in the state of Pennsylvania.

Data Analysis

Transcription of the interviews involved using TEAMS and noting any basic patterns that emerge from the data on the margins of transcripts. The coding process then involves reading the transcripts to identify patterns that emerge from the qualitative analysis (Butina, 2015). The transcriptions were categorized and coded by the participant number or alias under prior education experience, correctional education experience, and post-released behavior and choices. Once the information was categorized, each transcript was reviewed line by line to capture the emerging themes relevant to the research questions.

Qualitative data analysis was used to make sense of the data to answer the research questions. Qualitative data and analysis are often not linear because data collection and basic analysis are simultaneous practices (Butina, 2015). Butina (2015) suggested that initial qualitative data analysis commences during the interview because it is possible to identify emerging insights, which directs the researcher to refine interview questions or ask probing questions to elicit more insights from the participant.

The narrative and thematic analysis involved preparing and organizing data, coding, developing themes, and interpreting data (Butina, 2015). The first stage involved using TEAMS to transcribe the audio data after the interview and noting any basic patterns that emerge from the

data on the margins of transcripts. The coding process then involved reading the transcripts to identify patterns that emerge from the qualitative analysis (Butina, 2015). This involved re-reading the transcripts, highlighting the major ideas or messages in each narrative, and assigning shorthand designations to enable me to identify recurring concepts or ideas. The researcher then placed these codes into phrases or themes that addressed the study's research questions. The last phase of narrative and thematic analysis was interpreting the qualitative data by studying themes and codes to determine the insight about the value of correctional education programs. The themes were categorized by the researcher under prior education experience, education experience during incarceration, and post-released behavior and choices.

In addition to the researcher identifying themes and codes, a more rigorous analysis of the qualitative data was conducted using MAXQDA, a qualitative analysis software program. MAXQDA is software designed for mixed-method, data, text, and multimedia analysis, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method data. The actual analysis is conducted by the researcher using the program, which confirmed the emerging themes.

Management of Data

To manage the data, individual folders were for each participant, using their pseudonym name. Each folder contained the demographic survey, the informed consent documentation, and the transcription of the personal interview. The researcher stored the folders in a locked file cabinet to safeguard the data collected in this study and is the only individual with access to the file cabinet. All files and data collected electronically for the study were exported, downloaded, and will be stored for three years per the university's protocol. All study files in any format will subsequently be destroyed.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To promote trustworthiness in this qualitative study, the researcher ensured that the study met its four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Maher et al., 2018).

Credibility: To establish credibility, the study must measure what it intended and be a true reflection of the social reality of the participants (Maher et al., 2018). According to Mahar et al., 2018 strategies for credibility include prolonged engagement, encountering the participant for an extended period of time and member checking, and using the participant to cross-check the data. In this study, credibility was strengthened by providing straightforward interview questions to address the research question. Credibility was also sustained through member checking, allowing each participant to review their responses on the questionnaire and the interview transcript, verify the facts, and confirm their original words.

Transferability: Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings are applied to different contexts or settings (Maher et al, 2018). To meet transferability, the researcher provided a detailed description of the criteria for inclusion in the study. To determine eligibility each participant was given a demographic questionnaire to complete. A list of questions was developed to capture, whether they identified as a woman, participated in correctional education programs anytime during incarceration, and the year released from incarceration.

Dependability: To address dependability a researcher must be sufficiently descriptive to allow another research to repeat the study (Maher et al, 2018). Dependability in this study was ensured through a number of measures. First, the criteria for inclusion in the study was strictly adhered to ensure only qualified participants were selected. Secondly, the structure of the

questions asked was designed to be consistent and standardized, which helped to eliminate bias in the response given. Finally, each participant was asked the same questions, without any deviations to ensure the data collected was reliable, consistent, and accurate.

Confirmability: Is the goal of minimizing a researcher's bias by acknowledging any predispositions (Maher et al, 2018). To achieve confirmability in this study, the researcher solicited correctional supervisors and experts to review the research methods and questions prior to commencement (Ghafouri & Ofoghi, 2016). The researcher then used the recommendations of the reviewers to finalize my methodology and questions. The researcher also sought to build rapport with the participants to help ensure honest responses to the questions by informing each participant of my work history in the field of corrections. My being a former employee was essential to help build rapport.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the methodology for this qualitative study. In this chapter, the research design and approach, data sampling method, data collection, interview protocol, data analysis, and trustworthiness were detailed. Thus, this qualitative study used narrative inquiry to conduct interviews of at least ten formerly incarcerated women in the state of New York. Chapter 4 discusses the thematic analysis and subsequent findings for this research.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the value of correctional education programs through the lived experiences, and perspectives, of formerly incarcerated women. This study focused on giving a voice to formerly incarcerated women who participated in correctional education programs in New York state jails and prisons. In this study, the researcher paid particular attention to whether correctional education programs were valued and if participation influenced post-release behavior and choices.

To briefly recap, the following research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. What were the experiences, and perspectives of formerly incarcerated women with correctional education programs while incarcerated?
2. What were the motivating factors that influenced formerly incarcerated women to participate in correctional education programs?
3. How do formerly incarcerated women believe their participation in correctional education programs influenced their post-release behavior and choices?

This chapter discusses the culmination of my efforts to examine the value of correctional education programs from formerly incarcerated women's lived experiences, and perspectives. This chapter discusses the data collected from open-ended interviews with ten formerly incarcerated women to capture their experiences, and perspectives on correctional education programs.

Participant Demographics

The first step to determining the demographics of the participants was through the use of a questionnaire to capture basis information (Appendix A). The ten participants in this study were all previously incarcerated in a jail or prison within New York State, released during 2017 through 2022. The participants were from different ethnic backgrounds and consisted of five African Americans, three Hispanics, and two Caucasians. The age of the participants ranges from 19 years old to 65 years old.

Among the participants, six were single, three were married, and one was divorced. All ten participants had children. Seven participants had two children, and three had one child. Eight participants had a religious background and were within four religious' faiths: Christianity, Baptist, Non-Denominational, and Catholic. The participants are identified throughout this study using pseudonyms to document their participation in correctional education programs. Table 1 provides the demographic profile for the study's participants.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Participants

| Participants | Age | Race | Marital Status | Religion | Number of Children | Year Released |
|--------------|---------|------------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------|
| Nancy | 23 - 34 | Hispanic | Married | Christian | 2 | 2017 |
| Celeste | 55 - 64 | African American | Single | Baptist | 1 | 2019 |
| China | 45 - 54 | African American | Single | None | 2 | 2020 |
| Kelly | 18 - 24 | African American | Single | Christian | 1 | 2018 |
| Lashawn | 35 - 44 | African American | Single | Christian | 2 | 2019 |
| Liz | 35 -44 | Caucasian | Single | None | 2 | 2021 |
| Rebecca | 35 -44 | African American | Married | Christian | 2 | 2018 |
| Sara | 35 - 44 | Caucasian | Divorced | Catholic | 2 | 2021 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|---------|------------------|---------|----------|---|------|
| Stacy | 65 - 74 | African American | Married | Baptist | 1 | 2022 |
| Stephanie | 35 - 44 | Hispanic | Single | Catholic | 2 | 2017 |

The next step involved the systematic generation of codes. The ten interviews were coded and separated under education experience prior to incarceration, experience during incarceration and post release behavior. Table 2 depicts the identified codes that emerged from this study.

Table 2

Identified Codes

| Education Prior | Education During | Post Release behavior |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Shame | Job skills | Stability |
| Wrong crowd | Life skills | Stable Employment |
| Difficulty learning | Availability of Programs | Overcoming Biases |
| No family support | Facility lockdowns | Rebuild Family Ties |
| No interest in Education | Supportive Staff | Dealing with Rejection |
| Live changing events | Encouragement | Drug Treatment |
| Mental Health | | Work Ethics |
| Stigmas | | Successful Reentry |
| Emotional/Physical Abuse | | |

There are twelve common themes discussed as a result of this research. Table 3 depicts the themes and the relationship to each research question.

Table 3*Summary of Emerged Themes*

| Questions | Themes | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|--|-----------|------------|
| General Question: | | | |
| What was your experience with education prior to incarceration? | 1. Amotivation | 8 | 80% |
| | 2. Peer Pressure | 9 | 90% |
| | 3. Lack of Family Encouragement | 7 | 70% |
| Research Question # 1: | | | |
| What were the experiences and perspectives of formerly incarcerated women with correctional education programs? | 1. Realistic | 7 | 70% |
| | 2. Beneficial | 10 | 100% |
| | 3. Supportive | 9 | 90% |
| Research Question # 2: | | | |
| What were the motivating factors that influenced formerly incarcerated women to participate in correctional education programs? | 1. Employment Opportunities and Wealth | 10 | 100 % |
| | 2. Rebuild Family Time | 7 | 70% |
| | 3. Positive Community Adjustment | 10 | 100% |
| Research Question # 3: | | | |
| Do formerly incarcerated women believe their participation in correctional education programs influenced their post-release behavior and choices? | 1. Good Work Habits | 8 | 80% |
| | 2. A Stable Home | 10 | 100% |
| | 3. Freedom from Drug and Alcohol Abuse | 9 | 90% |

In terms of educational background, prior to incarceration, eight (8) participants had less than a high school diploma, and two (2) participants had a high school diploma. As for the parental education status of the participants, six (6) of the participants' mothers and fathers obtained a high school diploma, one participant's mother obtained a bachelor's degree, and three participants were unsure of their parents' educational status. Table 4 presents the participants' and their parents' educational background.

Table 4*Participants' and Parents Educational Background*

| Participants | Education Prior to Incarceration | Mother's Educational Level | Father's Educational Level |
|--------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Nancy | 10th | HS Diploma | HS Diploma |
| Celeste | AS Degree | HS Diploma | HS Diploma |
| Rebecca | 8th | Less than HS | Less than HS |
| Stacy | 10th | BA Degree | HS Diploma |
| Sara | 10th | HS Diploma | HS Diploma |
| China | High School | HS Diploma | HS Diploma |
| Stephanie | 9th | HS Diploma | HS Diploma |
| Lashawn | High School | HS Diploma | HS Diploma |
| Liz | 11th | Less than HS | Unsure |
| Kelly | High School | Less than HS | Unsure |

At the time of this study, all participants were involved in at least one type of correctional education program during any time of their incarceration. Table 5 depicts the correctional education programs the women participated in during any time of their incarceration.

Table 5*Participants' Correctional Education Program Participation*

| Participants | Name of Facility | Education Achieved During Incarceration | Length of Time Attended |
|--------------|------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Nancy | Albion | GED | 2 years |
| Celeste | RMSC | ABE/Post-Release | 8 months / 3 months |
| Rebecca | Albion | ABE/GED/Life skills | 2 years/1 year/6mths |
| Stacy | Albion | GED/College courses | 2 years / 6 months |
| Sara | Albion | GED/Life skills College courses | 2 years / 10 months |
| China | RMSC | Life skills courses | 1 year |
| Stephanie | RMSC / Albion | ABE/GED | 2 years / 1 year |
| Lashawn | RMSC / Bedford | ABE/GED | 2 years / 2 years |
| Liz | Bedford | ABE/GED | 1 year / 2 years |
| Kelly | Bedford | Life skills / College courses | 1 year / 1 year |

Note: RMSC = Rose M. Singer Center; ABE = Adult Basic Education

In this section, the researcher explains the participants' experiences, and perspectives, on the value of correctional education programs. Participants in this study shared elements of their

experiences, and perspectives, of correctional education programs through narratives describing personal motivating factors, challenges, and barriers leading up to their educational goals and post-release behavior. To understand the participants' experiences in the educational programs, it was essential to explore their educational background prior to incarceration.

Education Experience Prior to Incarceration

To examine the participants' relationship with school prior to incarceration, each participant was asked to share their personal experience with school during their childhood. The idea was to capture whether the participants had experiences that helped to facilitate a positive learning environment or negative influences that hindered their ability to complete a K-12 education. Table 6 provides the common themes represented from education experiences prior to incarceration.

Table 6

Educational Experience Prior to Incarceration

| General Question: | Themes | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| What was your experience with education prior to incarceration? | 1. Amotivation | 8 | 80% |
| | 2. Peer Pressure | 9 | 90% |
| | 3. Lack of Family Encouragement | 7 | 70% |
| | | | |

As participants shared their background and early school experiences, three themes were continuously expressed: *amotivation*, *peer pressure*, and *lack of family encouragement*. The participants indicated that they experienced low education levels and lack motivation for school at a young age. The average educational level achieved was less than high school and most participants felt that the lack of interest in school was associated with peer pressure and lack of family encouragement.

Amotivation Theme

A common theme amongst many of the participants was the lack of motivation to attend school, particularly high school. The participants that spoke about being amotivated particularly emphasized they struggled with schoolwork and were hanging out with the wrong crowd. They further noted that they did not value education, and failing to attend school was a factor in their incarceration. Their stories emphasized that the lack of schooling hindered their ability to obtain employment, leading to crime to acquire wealth. Thus, China, an African American between the ages of 35–44 years who skipped school and began to sell drugs for money, noted:

I remember struggling to make friends when I was young and in elementary school, so I hated school. When I got to high school, things got a little better, and I began to like school and was doing well. Then, I started mixing with the wrong crowd and began to hang out instead of going to school...I would skip school like two to three times a week, and I started failing really bad, so I just gave up on school. I was like, what's the point of going if I'm failing anyway. So, now I'm hanging out, no education, so I started selling drugs for money and got busted, so this led to my first time doing jail time.

The shared, unique story of Rebecca also indicates a failed attempt at school prior to incarceration and subsequently living as a drug dealer. Rebecca, an African American between the age of 35–44 years old and an eighth-grade dropout, gauged her amotivation for school as a reflection of a disruptive home environment. She described her mother as a drug addict and, being only 12 years old and having to fend for herself, selling drugs to meet her financial needs:

My mother was an addict, and by the time I was, I want to say, 12 years old, I was already selling drugs and doing drugs myself. This became a challenge for me to also go to school and maintain, you know, honestly, I felt like an adult; you know, I didn't have

much rules at my house. There was no, you know, I was selling drugs in my own house, you know, to my own mother. This was like a family business type of thing. And it was hard for me to, you know, go to school with children who have. I didn't have anything in common with anyone, so I dropped out.

Five other participants shared similar stories that they were equally amotivated towards attending school because of many challenges and barriers encountered. They reported they failed to complete a high school diploma and equated the lack of education as the reason for their criminal activity, which resulted in incarceration. In all, the interview data shows that eight (8) participants were unsuccessful in obtaining a high school diploma prior to their incarceration. Their responses reflect amotivation for attending school based on failing classes, mixing with the wrong crowds, and lacking family encouragement.

Peer Pressure Theme

The next theme, *peer pressure*, refers to how participants' friends influenced them, changing their mental and emotional behavior toward attending school. This theme was one of the more common themes, as nine (9) participants narrated stories that attending school was considered a waste of time, and thriving to maintain friendships was considered the most significant thing in their life. Sara discussed that maintaining a childhood friendship caused her to drop out of high school in the eleventh grade to become an additional caregiver to her best friend's child.

My best friend had her daughter at 17 years old. I remember she told me that I was wasting my time in school and that if I want to hang out with her, I should forget about school. I was feeling like it was my obligation to keep our friendship together. So, I

started to skip school and hang out at her house, and you know, became like a second mother to her daughter. I stopped going in the eleventh grade.

Sara recalls that it was only after becoming a teenage mom and being incarcerated several times that she realized that having an education was essential to being more economically stable to care for her own daughter. She would later credit a parole officer for encouraging her to enroll in correctional education programs after she was returned to prison for a drug offense.

Other participants also discussed the peer pressure of joining the in-crowds and dealing with alcohol and drugs. For Liz, Stephanie, and Kelly, alcohol and drugs were huge factors that led to them skipping school or that they felt caused their incarceration. As each described it:

Stephanie: I used so many drugs in my younger days that I forgot how many times I was incarcerated...It's really sad that I didn't stay in school. I remember one time I studied hard for a math test, but my friend didn't. The next day she asked me to skip school because she knew she wasn't going to pass the test, so I didn't go to school that day; we hung out in the park all day and smoked weed, and I missed the test. After missing the math test, I didn't want to go to school no more. But I would go, and I would hide from my math teacher in the hall because I couldn't face him, so I just eventually stopped going to school; next thing, I was in jail for stealing.

Participant Liz also spoke about how peer pressure from her boyfriend lead to her drug use and incarceration.

Liz: I would drink alcohol and do drugs in the park with my friends instead of going to school. I met a guy, and he was a drug dealer; we started dating. He

would always pressure me to go with him to buy drugs, and one day we got caught, and I stayed in jail for six months.

Participant Kelly indicated that hanging with the wrong crowd lead to her drug use.

Kelly: I skipped school to hang out at my friend's house when her mother went to work. We would smoke weed all day right up until her mother came home.

Although China did not relate to succumbing to peer pressure, she indicated that peer pressure and substance abuse was prevalent, and while school was a little tough, she received a high school diploma.

Lack of Family Encouragement Theme

The final theme related to the participants' educational experience prior to incarceration was the *lack of family encouragement*. Some participants shared their stories of significant challenges regarding the impact of victimization, including behaviors that might be described as "internalizing" or overcontrolled behaviors. These included feelings of emotional distress, worthlessness, and withdrawal from activities.

The most prevalent manifestations were persistent worthlessness or discomfort. For example, Sara discussed that not only did her mother fail to encourage school participation, but she also was often body-shamed and accused of being sexually active before doing so. Additionally, when Celeste was 15 or 16 years old, she started getting verbally and physically abused. She described her mother as yelling, "You are an idiot, wasting the school's time; you need to get a job to help pay these bills." Celeste did not know how to talk to anyone about the abuse, so she avoided school out of fear of having to discuss it.

Five (5) other participants discussed thoughts of running away from home because of parents' neglect or abusive behavior that hindered their motivation and ability to concentrate in school. For example, Stacey coped with abuse by running away. She first ran away at 14 years old and stayed away for more than two weeks. During the two weeks, she stayed with her girlfriend and skipped school.

Summary: Education Experience Prior to Incarceration

Overall, whether they were amotivated, under peer pressure, or emotionally/physically abused, the early school experiences of these women were challenging. Several women discussed that the poor academic performance and instability in their home life was a by-product of their parents undervalue of education. Each participant's truth is that the challenges faced at a young age caused them to devalue the importance of education, which influenced their psychological characteristics and led to incarceration.

Experiences with Correctional Education Programs

To capture the personal experience with correctional educational programs, each participant was asked to explain the type of education programs available in their housing facility, type of program they participated in and what motivated their participation in the program. The reoccurring themes in this section were *realistic skills*, personal *benefit*, and *supportive* staff educational program experiences. Table 7 depicts the common themes associated with the participants' experiences with correctional education programs.

Table 7

Experiences with Correctional Education Programs

| Research Question # 1: | Themes | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| What were the experiences and perspectives of formerly incarcerated women with correctional education programs? | 1. | | |
| | Realistic | 7 | 70% |
| | 2. Beneficial | 10 | 100% |
| | 3. Supportive | 9 | 90% |

Realistic Skills Theme

The theme of developing realistic skills refers to having or showing the ability to enhance self-development and job skills for a successful transition back into society. For some, the *realistic* experiences with educational programs related directly to the self-determination theory, as seven participants indicated they were actively motivated each day to participate because their educational goals seemed achievable.

For some participants, they felt that participating in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program to improve their literacy skills was a manageable and measurable task that could be accomplished quickly and provided instant gratification. For example, Lashawn, an African American between the age of 35–44, incarcerated for two years, recalls that when she attended ABE classes, the instructor was very encouraging in helping her to annunciate words. When returning to her cell, she routinely practiced different words, becoming overwhelmed with joy as her literacy skills improved. Likewise, Celeste, previously incarcerated for attempted murder, indicated that she knew her violent crime would prevent her from obtaining specific jobs. However, participating in ABE and culinary arts was realistic to increasing her eighth-grade reading level and her ability to gain successful employment in the restaurant industry.

A few other women also expressed gratitude that their correctional institution offered realistic educational programs to help hone the necessary skills to expedite their transition into society, allowing them to reconnect with family, gain employment, and become productive citizens. For example, Nancy, convicted of forgery, indicated that the life skills course in personal responsibilities helped her to accept accountability for her actions. She recalls blaming others for the hard times in her life but indicated that working with a mentor was "the real deal." Nancy shared:

I remember being so grateful that I was allowed to participate in this program...it really helped me to see the big picture, to see what I needed to do when I got out.

That course was the real deal; man, oh man, I loved it.

Listening to these women narrate their stories; it became clear that each participant was satisfied with the type of correctional education programs offered. Essentially, this is important to understand the needs of female offenders and whether the programs are beneficial to their success, which leads to my next theme.

Personal Benefit Theme

Another theme that emerged centered on the experiences with correctional education programs was the personal *benefit* of academic participation. The interview data demonstrated that all the participants frequently shared that academic participation was beneficial to developing their personal and psychological needs. Liz discussed that attending life skills courses helped her to build confidence and gave her a sense of purpose and a vision:

In the beginning of the class, I was afraid to open up to share my experiences and didn't want to tell my story. After about a month and listening to others, I began to embrace hopefulness and was able to communicate that I wanted to be better on the outside, get a job, and be more productive.

Liz's perception of participating in the life skills courses was for the benefit of self-esteem enhancement, which is useful and valuable to her future.

Similarly, Sara recounted that the benefit and upside of participating in correctional education programs was that it removed her daily from a stressful housing environment. She said, "I would participate in almost all the correctional education programs, like ABE, life skills, vocational training, etc., just to remove myself from the stressors in my housing area, like falling

with the wrong crowds or the gangs.” For Sara, the participation may not have started as 100 percent pure, but the outcome was positive because of the negativity within the housing environment. By choosing something else, she immersed herself into positivity, and this became a self-fulfilling prophecy, a binary choice; I could stay in the housing area or immerse myself in classes. As this resonated, she chose to make herself better.

Supportive Staff Theme

The final theme to emerge from participants’ experiences with correctional education programs was the *supportive* nature of the correctional staff and educators. In general, nine participants indicated that they felt the correctional staff and educators supported their educational goals. The women did not mention institutional barriers such as scheduling problems, procedural problems or time requirements, security issues, or a lack of staffing or other challenges that hindered their educational goals. For example, Kelly recalls a remarkable story of staff support during an institutional lockdown thirty minutes before her scheduled GED exam:

The day I was supposed to take my GED, there was a lockdown, and no one could go anywhere. You know, sometimes it takes hours to clear. I just sat there and cried, you know, because I knew, you know, I was going to miss the test. So, I was in my cell crying, and then I heard someone tap on my cell door, and I looked up, and it was the school CO officer. She said let's go. I remember crying all the way to the school because I couldn't believe she came to get me. She was like, I know how important the GED is. I got authorization to come pick you up, so you wouldn't miss it. I will never forget what that CO did for me. I tell this story to everyone.

Similarly, to Kelly's experience, Stephanie and Lashawn, GED recipients during their incarceration, indicated they struggled with their studies while attending the education programs. They provided additional accounts of having educators and uniformed staff helped them overcome challenges and develop a sense of belonging. Stephanie, a Hispanic between the age of 35–44 years old who was incarcerated for attempted murder, was concerned that her enrollment in additional GED courses would hinder the space availability for younger participants because she had previously failed the GED exam twice and had a lengthy sentence. She shared that she was intellectually unable to understand that despite her age, and lengthy sentence, that she should have the opportunity to participate in correctional education.

It was hard figuring out if I belong in the classes. I told the teacher, I'm struggling really bad with the work; maybe I shouldn't be in the class; I should give my spot to someone else, you know, a younger prisoner. The teacher said 'you are here, and I'm going to make sure you finish.' She supported me the whole time and helped me pass the GED. Earning her GED three years ago and having the staff's support was still a fresh memory of her lengthy sentence. Like Stephanie, Nancy felt she did not belong in the educational programs and distanced herself from her peers. She recalls struggling for months with being an outcast when other prisoners would intentionally not select her to work in peer groups until a new teacher arrived and changed it all:

One day, we got a new teacher, and she was really nice; she stopped letting people pick the groups and would put us in groups herself. She put us in different groups every day, and it made us talk to everyone. She would always say things like 'Each one, teach one,' 'No question is a dumb question,' and things like that, and made us help each other.

Summary: Experiences with Correctional Education Programs

This previous section discussed the perspectives, and personal experiences with correctional education programs for each participant during their incarceration. Collectively, the women voiced their contentment with the correctional education they received, affirming its constructive influence on their individual and emotional development. They perceived themselves as well-prepared with practical abilities that were pertinent to their requirements, and the programs aimed to enhance communication between educators and those impacted by the justice system. Frustratingly, most research on correctional employees is rarely tempered by correction officers doing good or motivating prisoners, as experienced with these participants, and moves the study on to address the next research question.

Motivation for Participating in Correctional Education Programs

In line with my second research question, the researcher investigated the motivating factors behind participation in correctional education programs from the perspective of (SDT). Each participant was asked to share specific motivating factors that prompt their participation in correction education programs. The researcher asked if the educational climate in correctional facilities helped with motivation such as staffing, eligible resources or the availability of programs or whether personal influences participation in correctional education programs.

The participants imparted narratives on common themes of their desire to increase employment opportunities and financial stability, rebuild family ties, and a positive community adjustment. They acknowledge that the key to successful reintegration was using correctional education programs to attain these goals. The finding in this section underscores that participants' academic motivation was an effort to adapt educational opportunities to their needs. Table 8 presents the themes associated with the participant's motivation factors.

Table 8*Motivating Factors for Participation*

| Research Question # 2: | Themes | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| What were the motivating factors that influenced formerly incarcerated women to participate in correctional education programs? | 1. Employment | | |
| | Opportunities and Wealth | 10 | 100 % |
| | 2. Rebuild Family Time | 7 | 70% |
| | 3. Positive Community Adjustment | 10 | 100% |

Employment Opportunities and Financial Stability Theme

All the participants emphasized they sought to use the educational programs as a valuable tool to help increase *employment opportunities* and to gain *financial stability*. Each participant recalled the struggles they endured in the community with finding adequate employment, which often fell short of meeting their financial needs. Most participants described their intricate motives as actions driven to prevent recidivism and foster employment opportunities to avoid reverting to criminal activity to substitute for their financial needs. For example, Rebecca shared that she was motivated to participate in correctional education programs to find suitable jobs upon being released to provide for her family, until she could embark on an entrepreneurship in the music industry. Rebecca recalls:

During my last bid, incarceration, I often thought about the difficulties of finding a job after getting out. So, I came up with a game plan. I liked music, and when I met a young lady that could sing in my dorm. I started thinking about being a manager and starting my own management company. But to do that, I had to learn to read; you know, I dropped out in the 8th grade, and my reading wasn't that good, that great. So, I first enrolled in the ABE program, so I could learn to read better, and then the GED course. I just kept enrolling in programs to learn more so I could

get a good job when I got out, so I could start my music business. I thought this would give me a steady good income, you know, a stable income in the long run.

Some participants also implied that courses that addressed criminogenic factors, such as substance abuse and anger management, helped divert the frustration often caused by failing to find sustainable employment. For example, Celeste shared:

I was motivated to attend the programs to get a job and provide for my daughter in the way that I should have been able to provide for her opposed to doing it the easy way, which I thought was the easy way of stealing, which led me to be incarcerated. And I just wanted to do, you know, the right thing ... I would get so mad when I couldn't find a job, so those anger class helped me with that, you know, so I wouldn't get so mad and do better with knowing why I didn't get the job.

Rebecca and Celeste's experiences provided clear insight into the psychological needs of each participant's motivation to pursue correctional education programs and what they wanted to achieve personally from the education programs. For both participants, their motivation was attributed to a future job, an example of extrinsic motivation to participate in an activity to gain an outcome.

Rebuilding Family Ties Theme

In expressing their desire to *rebuild family connections*, seven participants communicated they yearned to surround themselves with positive and supportive family members as a support network and used educational courses that focused on life skills as a change mechanism. When asked why they felt the need to build a support network before reintegration, they communicated

that rebuilding family ties and having a support network was essential to helping them to change their behavior post-release and to better themselves. They expressed it was challenging to return to the same community where their previous behavior or incarceration may have resulted in a failed partner relationship, caused homelessness, or ostracized them from family and friends. All the women felt that returning to the same neighborhood without a support network is a struggle that often results in reverting to criminal activity. For example, Nancy shared:

It is important to try and create a clean slate with family and friends. I was doing so many bad things, and being in prison and taking those courses that help you do better with life circumstances helped me to understand that I needed forgiveness...I stole a family heirloom and sold it for pennies; I needed my family to forgive me; I prayed about this every day; it was a real struggle getting past this.

Likewise, Celeste shared:

I didn't like the person that I was, and I just wanted to be a better person and not hurt the people that I love. Umm, I had a, you know, I have a daughter, and I wanted to show her that I can do better, you know? And that's not the way of life, so in the groups, we talked about changing bad habits.

The narratives explain why supporters of adult correctional education programs have emphasized that when incarcerated women receive education, post-release opportunities are greater when transitioning back into society. Teaching incarcerated women how to build a supportive family and friend networks post-release helps promote stronger housing possibilities for reunification with their children, strengthens emotional support in dealing with mental and medical issues, and provides more stability during the transition process.

Positive Community Adjustment Theme

In listening to the participants narrate their stories, it became evident that the women experienced barriers that altered their confidence in engaging and connecting positively during the reintegration process. All participants shared accounts of being victims of stigmas associated with incarceration, which most frequently included various forms of discrimination. The participants expressed that previous experiences of victimization motivated their internal beliefs about themselves and attending educational programs offered emotional support. The participants felt taking educational courses aided in a *Positive community adjustment*, referred to knowing how to emotionally handle successfully transitioning back into society, avoiding the stigmas associated with incarceration.

Participating in correctional education programs such as the Aggression Replacement Training (ART) program helped these women to improve their social skills. It provided the best practices for coping with reducing aggressive behavior using self-regulating exercises. This program often requires the sharing of personal experiences in group settings. This technique helped to promote the social well-being of the participants. For example, as China shared, "I took the self-development ART [classes] because it helped to deal with the rejections and discrimination you were about to face once released." Likewise, as Sara recalls:

I attended the ART course; I needed to improve my social skills because one time when I was released, it was hard dealing with people. I became homeless, and I couldn't find a job. I stayed away from people because I didn't like the way they treated me, I would get so mad and go over the top, so I lived on the streets. So, I took the ART classes because I wanted to be able to deal with people. People

always treat you different when you come out of prison; they make it so hard to get back out there. They treat you less than as if you don't matter.

Summary: Motivation for Participating in Correctional Education Programs

The participants' motivation towards a positive community adjustment was a prominent theme, driven by a combination of autonomous and extrinsic factors through identification. By recognizing the value of the ART program in enhancing their confidence to overcome social obstacles linked to victimization and incarceration, the participants felt more self-determined in their quest for rehabilitation. This form of motivation, called regulation through identification, proved vital in their journey toward leading dignified and respectful lives. As a result, attending this program was seen by the participants as an important part of their recovery, enabling them to live productively with dignity and respect.

Influence of Correctional Education Programs on Post-Release Behavior and Choices

The term post-release behavior and choices in this section refer to behavior that perceivably reduced participants' likelihood of engaging in misconduct and criminal activity, since all the women were not incarcerated during this study. Specifically, given their individual characteristics, the participants were questioned if they had been rearrested since their last release date; each replied they had not been rearrested.

Notwithstanding the positive, encouraging, and supportive stories of correctional education programs shared thus far, the participants expressed that although balancing post-release behavior was challenging, they rose above the challenges. The common themes associated with RQ3 were the acknowledgments from the women that participation in correctional education programs, for the most part, helped them desist from criminal activities

and allowed them to adopt good work habits, a stable home, and freedom from drug and alcohol abuse. Table 9 depicts the themes associated with the participants post-release behavior and choices.

Table 9

Post-Release Behavior and Choices

| Research Question # 3: | Themes | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Do formerly incarcerated women believe their participation in correctional education programs influenced their post-release behavior and choices? | 1. Good Work Habits | 8 | 80% |
| | 2. A Stable Home | 10 | 100% |
| | 3. Freedom from Drug and Alcohol Abuse | 9 | 90% |

Good Work Habits Theme

Considering how they felt and what occurred during their post-release from prison, eight participants expressed that their correctional education program helped them gain employment and develop good work habits. At an even broader level, all the participants were adamant that the odds of successful reintegration were extremely low without correctional education programs. During her interview, Stacey shared that she would have more than likely been reconvicted if she had not participated in correctional education programs. She explained that returning to the same neighborhood before incarceration decreases an offender's odds of a successful transition. Stacey completed her GED while incarcerated and obtained an Associate degree in Business through the prison higher education program. Partnered with a second chance program, she is now a program consultant working with an organization that visits various prisons. She explained the organization's goal is "to try and unlock the human potential of those that are on the inside." She credits correctional education programs for giving her "the ability to

successfully obtain employment with the organization and the knowledge to complete her job functions."

Similarly, participants in the current research corroborated that training in post-secondary education while incarcerated had a substantial effect on job prospects and recidivism rates. For example, Stephanie, who earned a GED and a cosmetology certificate through correctional education programs, explained that her participation in academic and vocational programs was beneficial in changing her thought process of responding to hostile co-workers. She credited the educational programs for this behavior and indicated that the exposure helped improve her character, and that she now makes better choices.

Good work habits and obtaining employment after incarceration continues to be a challenge for formerly incarcerated women during reintegration. There tends to be a vicious cycle in which failing to gain employment leads to higher recidivism rates among individuals that do not participate in correctional education programs. However, due to hard work and determination, the participants in this study were able to obtain post-release employment. Nevertheless, most dealt with discrimination and stigmas associated with being incarcerated.

A Stable Home Theme

Participants shared a significant theme throughout their narratives: the motivation for completing education programs to reconnect and gain family support. All the participants believed that reuniting with their families and having family support was crucial to their post-release behavior and choices. According to SDT, gaining family support is the fulfillment of relatedness, the desire to interact and connect with family. For the participants, the involvement

in life skills courses helped to promote independence, and assisted in reconnecting with family, which they felt was vital to their well-being and mental health.

Against the backdrop of convicted felons not being allowed to live in public housing, all the participants shared that completing an educational program was a pathway to transitional outreach programs, which helped secure adequate permanent housing. More than half of the participants were mothers to at least one child. Each expressed that reuniting with their children and having a stable home released stress and led to positive post-release behavior and choices. Each shared:

Lashawn: I had a good relationship with my mother, but sometimes she would be too controlling, so living in the same house was difficult. My mom would get mad and we would argue, and not speak for days. Having a place of my own for me and my kids, was less of a headache, and I was able to focus on being there for my kids.

Stacy: My parents were married 50 years. They loved each other. And you know, they taught me good morals and principles. So, I wanted to get out and build a good home for my son because I had one as a kid.

In this study, the participants seemed passionate about building a solid education to secure employment and stable housing to care for their children. Most of the women acknowledged and appreciated the important role and services that correctional education programs provided for their successful transitions. For some, using these services to enhance family unification and to build strong family support was also associated with reduced substance abuse, the last theme in this section.

Freedom from Drug and Alcohol Abuse Theme

Another challenge faced during the reintegration process is substance abuse. Substance abuse was common among the participants and played a significant role in their inability to successfully reintegrate back into society on more than one occasion. Nine participants in this study acknowledged having a substance abuse problem and that they initially were hesitant to attend substance treatment services on the outside. For example, when asked to elaborate more on the lengthy process of freeing themselves from substance abuse, most of the comments were: "I struggled with admitting; I had a problem for years and refused treatment services; the substance abuse program in the prison made it easier" (Stephanie); "I was embarrassed to go to a drug treatment center; it was admitting I had a problem. In prison, I was able to receive substance abuse counseling and own up to my problem" (Rebecca); "In a sense, I would agree to go to the treatment centers, then never show up. While in prison, it was a lot easier to get started with treatment" (Celeste). In general, these comments indicate that early substance abuse treatment prior to reintegration may help incarcerated women be optimistic about their chances of success after release and influence post-release behaviors and choices.

Summary: Influence of Correctional Education Programs on Post-Release Behavior and Choices

The findings and themes above represented formerly incarcerated women's experiences, and perspectives, on correctional education programs. Although a forgotten population in literature on correctional education programs, the participants were eager to share their stories of motivation, determination, and success on how correctional education programs changed their lives. They were given an opportunity for their voices to be heard. The participants' narratives were used to understand whether there was value in the correctional education programs offered to this vulnerable population. They felt these programs needed to remain to assist other

incarcerated women with challenges during reintegration and to increase positive post-release behavior and choices.

Summary

Chapter 4 began by providing the demographic of the ten formerly incarcerated women interviewed in this study. The results of the open-ended interview questions were reported, revealing twelve themes narrated through the stories and remarks of the women. The results show value and support for correctional education programs in improving the advantages in avoiding recidivism. The women's responses are further discussed in Chapter 5, with the implications and recommendations for further research and practices.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter 5 presents the discussion for this qualitative study. Following a brief recap of the problem statement, it then discusses the education experience prior to incarceration and the value of correctional education programs from the lived experiences, and perspectives, of ten formerly incarcerated women. Finally, this chapter concludes with implications for future practices and further and future research.

The problem addressed in this qualitative study focuses on the issue of high recidivism rates among women in the United States since 1970. The number of incarcerated women has doubled from less than 8,000 in 1970 to over 110,000 in 2013, with around 60% of these women being rearrested after being released from prison (Collica-Cox, 2016; Sawyer & Wagner, 2019). Shockingly, 40% of these arrests are for new crimes, and an estimated 38% are reconvicted (Huebner et al., 2010). This suggests that more rehabilitation services may be needed to combat medical or mental health conditions, drug/substance abuse, inadequate education, homelessness, and unemployment. With the current rise in the population of women offenders, the effectiveness of correctional educational programs in preventing recidivism and assisting with post-release behavior and choices was in question. This study aimed to explore formerly incarcerated women's experiences, and perspectives on the value of correctional education programs and whether these programs impact post-release behavior and choices.

The study collected data from ten women previously incarcerated in a New York state jail or prison and released between 2017 and 2022, who participated and completed at least one correctional education program.

Discussion

The narration of interviews and the semi-structured questions identified twelve themes from the responses and other comments made by the participants; thus, the study's research questions can be addressed. The following section discusses the findings of this study within the context of existing literature on incarcerated women. Since literature on incarcerated women and correctional education programs were limited, the findings at times were compared to adult correctional education programs. This study was compiled to expand on educational needs of incarcerated women to aid in reducing recidivism and promoting successful re-entry.

Educational Level Prior to Incarceration

The general question sought insights into participants' experience in the educational programs by exploring their educational background before incarceration. Six participants had less than a high school diploma, and three others had a high school diploma. Consistent with the existing literature, the low education levels of current study participants led to their incarceration. Past reports have shown that 37% and 31% of the women incarcerated in the U.S. had not completed high school and post-secondary education, respectively (Ryder, 2020). Low school attainment is one of the educational risk factors associated with adult offending, incarceration, and recidivism (Beatton et al., 2018; Development Services Group, 2019; Rud et al., 2018). Other educational risk factors associated with criminal activity and incarceration include school dropout, low school attachment, and pessimistic attitudes toward school (Development Services Group, 2019).

In the current study, amotivation towards schoolwork and dropping out were the major educational risk factors that led participants to criminal involvement. In particular, the findings indicate that most participants did not value education and thus dropped out of school. The

relationship between dropping out of school and criminal involvement is not straightforward. Many factors underlie this relationship, including hanging out with the wrong crowd and the inability to obtain employment, made participants engage in criminal activities to acquire wealth. For example, an African American participant aged 35–44 dropped out of school and began hanging out with the wrong crowd. Eventually, she got into the drug business, which led to her incarceration. This example demonstrates how keeping bad company underlines the relationship between criminal involvement, imprisonment, and school dropout.

The study found that other participants shared that school dropouts and drugs were associated with family background characteristics such as being raised by a drug-addict mother. These findings align with the empirical literature that household background characteristics, including parent working status, household income, and parent education background, underline the relationship between school dropout and early criminal involvement of offenders (Rud et al., 2018).

As with amotivation, the study findings show that most participants highlighted the impact of peer pressure on their behavior toward attending school. According to one participant, Stephanie, “I had difficulty reading, and nobody cared that I struggled with it. My friends would ask me to cut school, so, I was like why should I go to school? I’m not learning anything. So, I stopped going.” Social sciences literature has documented the role of peer influence in criminal and risky behaviors among young people (Kim & Fletcher, 2018). Kim and Fletcher (2018) reported that peer pressure influences the risk-taking behavior of young people in social situations through social learning theory. There is mounting research evidence that peers, such as schoolmates, are a major social group influencing young people's behavior (Kim & Fletcher,

2018). This study found peer influence among nine participants to be strong because they considered attending school wasteful and maintaining friendships meaningful.

The current study's findings unpack the social learning mechanisms through which school dropout and criminal activity were socially transmitted, primarily through pressure and imitation (Kim & Fletcher, 2018). For example, one participant recalled how her friend told her that going to school wastes time and should instead hang out with her. Sara shared, “My best friend had her daughter at 17 years old. I remember she told me that I was wasting my time in school and that if I want to hang out with her, I should forget about school.” This led her to forget about school due to the obligation to keep their friendship together. Past research shows that the personalities of young people are shaped by the need to feel they belong to their peers; thus, getting approval from their peers is the utmost priority (Zakaria et al., 2022). Consistently, the current study findings suggest that friends influence the behavior of young women to drop out of school and engage in delinquency. Indeed, the results indicate that other participants would take alcohol and do drugs with their peers rather than go to school, which eventually led to their incarceration.

In addition to peer pressure, the current study findings indicate that neglect and emotional abuse undermined the participants' ability to continue with school. Some participants reported the significant challenges they encountered in their families, including emotional distress and withdrawal from activities due to an abusive family environment. Stacy: My mother called me degrading names such as stupid, idiot, and dummy so much, I started answering as if it was my name. Five participants noted that their parents' abusive behavior and neglect hampered their concentration in school. The findings suggest that negative family attributes or parenting practices in early adolescence force young people out of school. Similarly, recent studies have indicated that lack of parental support or love and parental hostility affect the personality

development of adolescents and thus encourage delinquent or criminal behavior (Mwangangi, 2019).

Further, the study findings that the mother of one participant failed to promote participation in school aligns with the concept of uninvolved parenting that describes a state whereby parents provide no supervision, show no warmth, and have few expectations of their children because they are beset by their own issues (Mwangangi, 2019). The current study findings indicate that families characterized by uninvolved parenting provide fertile ground for young offenders.

Value of Correctional Education Programs

The study shows that women prisoners participate in correctional educational programs due to the value attached to these programs, including a supportive and nurturing environment, enhancing employment prospects post-release, and reintegration into society. The findings indicate that women prisoners want to develop good work habits, find a stable home, and have freedom from criminal behavior after attending correctional education programs. Most of them held that correctional education programs were valuable in teaching them how to deal with and avoid negative influences in their often-challenging living conditions.

Women value correctional educational programs because they prepare them for a better life without engaging in criminal behavior. This means that the prison system should implement education programs in a nurturing environment to meet the needs or motivations of women prisoners, including learning new skills that prepare them for life after release. Moreover, the prison system should ensure that correctional educational programs transform women prisoners by helping them move away from crime post-release.

Research Question #1 focused on exploring the value of correctional education programs based on participants' experiences, and perspectives during their incarceration. The three themes

that emerged from this question were realistic skills, personal benefit and supportive staff in programs that played a crucial role in helping participants to achieve their educational goals. According to the findings, most participants expressed having a positive and supportive correctional education experience, which provided them with a sense of purpose. Participant Kelly suggested that more correctional institutions should have supportive educators and uniform staff to increase participation in rehabilitative services. Other participants also expressed that depending on the institution and staffing, the educational programs were valuable in helping develop social characteristics that were significant to their rehabilitation.

These findings suggest that when correctional institutions provide supportive learning environments to offenders, the likelihood of participation increases, and the programs are valued. Specifically, placing them in a supportive environment and monitoring their progress actively helps the offender understand and willingly participate in their own rehabilitation (Bozick et al., 2018). According to Participant Kelly, "staff support and encouragement were critical to her literacy improvements." Further, given that, most participants expressed that the crucial role of supportive and compassionate nature of the educators and correctional staff was essential in making their education experience more enjoyable and helped to enhance focus on rehabilitation, it supports the existing literature educational program connect prisoners with instructors in the supportive, nurturing environment which is essential to effective rehabilitation and learning (Bozick et al., 2018).

The women participants were also very outspoken about the types of programs that varied by institution. Although many programs were offered in each New York State facility, the women were excited to participate in educational programming that provided skills beyond stereotypical occupations like caregivers or administrative assistants. They used realistic and

beneficial terms to describe the courses as manageable tasks that would benefit them in the future. This perspective magnifies that the value of correctional education programs depends on one's perception of the need for a specific program. These perceptions were consistent with existing literature that educational programming should be based on the needs of an offender rather than gender-specific programming, which may hinder women from capitalizing on skills and academic achievements that are necessary to facilitate their successful return to society (Korzh, 2021; Sultan & Myrent, 2020).

In a study examining the education aspirations of women in Ukraine prisons, Korzh (2021) found that personal, family, and economic factors motivated women to participate in correctional education programs. Similar to the current study findings, personal/intrinsic motivations for women incarcerated in Ukraine are driven to meet personal needs. In contrast, the economic incentives or extrinsic motivations include the desire to enhance one's employment prospects post-release (Korzh, 2021). Fundamentally, the findings suggest that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to participate in correctional education programs are guided by the women's desire to acquire competencies and prospects of gainful employment post-release.

Research Question # 2 found that most study participants who sought to participate in ABE, Life-skills, and GED courses experienced sexual abuse, neglect, substance abuse, domestic violence, or homelessness at least once. The impact of trauma and burdens from victimization contributed to their chaotic lives and incarceration. As the trauma of victimization accumulated over the years, the women were disenfranchised from their children and loved ones for substantial periods.

The findings align with past studies that abusive parenting style is associated with criminal behavior in children (Yusuf et al., 2021; Wongchum et al., 2021; Tapia et al., 2018). In

a survey of youth offenders in China, Wongchum et al. (2021) found that uninvolved and authoritative parenting styles were associated with 79.1% and 19.8% of delinquent behavior. Consistently, Yusuf et al. (2021) found that parental abuse, including violence, was widespread in Nigeria and resulted in delinquency behavior, which was similar to the reports by most participants. The current study participants said childhood abuse increases the risk of young people engaging in criminal behavior. The findings confirm that participants who encountered parental abuse suffered emotionally and sought comfort from the delinquent people by hanging with them and engaging in delinquent or criminal behavior (Yusuf et al., 2021).

The troubled adolescence associated with delinquent behavior motivated many correctional education program participants to learn necessary social skills. The data collected from this question suggests that the motivation to participate in correctional education programs was to develop employable skills, omit habits that resulted in incarceration, and family unification. The turning point for most participants was the desire to reunite with children who have aged and now understood the reason for their absence. Studies show that women often cite their children as a source of strength, and addressing strong familial ties can reduce crime. (Bushway & Apel, 2012; Farabee et al., 2014; Wooditch et al., 2014; Ramakers et al., 2017).

Manger et al. (2020) noted that individuals engage in voluntary behavior because they value its significance to their life or future, a form of extrinsic motivation. The data indicates that correctional educators should prioritize the children of incarcerated women when developing curriculum plans and regulating extrinsic motivation. The participants in this study further revealed that the leading causes of stress during incarceration were the lack of visits and infrequent telephone communication with their children. The findings show that when

developing curriculum plans for incarcerated women, correctional educators must proactively identify the regulation of extrinsic motivation if children are the participant's primary focus.

The third research question of this study found that participants were successful in post-reintegration behavior. Most of the participants cited several reasons for their successful post-release behavior. The common themes were the development of good work habits, finding a stable home, and freedom from substance abuse after attending correctional education programs. A notable finding in the study was that the participants believed that correctional education programs were valuable in teaching formerly incarcerated women how to deal with and avoid negative influences in their often-unhealthy living conditions. Most participants indicated that a crucial element in their success was walking away from hostile home environments and securing affordable housing, strengthening the bond with their children. These findings again support existing literature, such as when (Fontaine & Biess, 2012) emphasized incarceration places individuals at an increased risk of housing instability and insecurity immediately upon release.

Other benefits mentioned were increased job opportunities, a feeling of self-confidence towards reintegrating into the same communities before their incarceration, and better decision-making for avoiding substance abuse, showing they can be successful and positive in the community. This finding is supported by Papaioannou et al. (2018), who elucidated that the overwhelming majority of incarcerated individuals have lower educational attainment. Thus, correctional educational programs that allow them to improve their education are vital to them.

In the current study, most women recognized lack of education or under-education as one factor responsible for their inability to get gainful employment and perhaps responsible for their criminal behaviors and incarceration. The formerly incarcerated women revealed that correctional educational programs prepare them for a better life without engaging in criminal

behavior. The findings of the participants' belief in correctional education programs reaffirm the value of offering such programs to incarcerated women in New York State. It is clear that when incarcerated women enroll in correctional educational programs, they mainly want to change the problematic situation that contributed to their criminal behavior and subsequent incarceration. Recent research has confirmed that imprisoned women participating in interventions such as education and skill-building support have lower recidivism rates (Hicks-Becton et al., 2022).

Implications

Based on the study findings incarcerated women find participation in correctional education programs valuable, and they are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated by various factors such as securing employment and acquiring life skills to build family ties and reduce their likelihood of recidivism post-release. Many incarcerated women have less than a high school diploma. According to the study findings, ABE, life-skills, and GED courses were considered the most desirable adult correctional education programs for women in correctional institutions, which is aligned with the prevailing scholarly literature (Davis et al., 2014). Therefore, the correctional system needs to determine the educational background and interests of the women when they arrive in prison to ensure that the instructional materials for the correctional education programs align with the interest or motivations of individual women prisoners. Although New York state prisons ask inmates about their highest education level prior to incarceration, state correctional administrators should verify those educational attainments to ensure that women prisoners are placed in the courses that best serve their interests.

Implications for Future Practice

The findings provide critical insights into the motivation of incarcerated women to participate in correctional educational programs that provide the basis for practical implications on the degree to which prisons and re-entry officials should recommend correctional education

programs to women prisoners, either career-oriented, directed towards transformation, or life-skills, parenting, and job-oriented.

In line with social determination theory (SDT), intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are critical in women's participation in correctional education programs. The current study found that various factors motivated incarcerated women to participate in correctional education programs, including increasing their employment opportunities and gaining financial stability, given the struggles they had endured in the community to find employment that could meet their financial needs. The data from this study corroborates with studies conducted by Duwe & Clark (2014), who indicated a strong connection between correctional education programs and positive recidivism and employment outcomes.

Sometimes, formerly incarcerated women face many challenges during their reintegration, such as having families to support, obtaining a stable home, and finding and maintaining employment (Seigafo, 2017). The current study also reveals that women are driven by the need to find employment opportunities to prevent them from returning to criminal activity to meet their financial needs. Therefore, correctional and criminal justice systems should guide women prisoners with enrolling in the correctional educational program that suits their requirements. In particular, there is a need to assess the educational background of women prisoners and their educational preferences when they arrive in prison and adapt correctional education programs to the individual profiles of inmates (Manger et al., 2020).

Implications for Future Policy

The study findings have implications for correction educational policy and planning for prison and reentry officials to determine how to improve education programs to enhance reentry and reduce recidivism. Correctional systems need to institute a policy requiring prison and re-

entry officials to ask prisoners questions to determine their level of education; this will help determine the nature of the correctional education program most suitable for each prisoner.

This is particularly important because the current study found that at the time of incarceration, most participants had less than a high school diploma and thus were unable to join gainful employment that could reduce their likelihood of recidivism (Ryder, 2020). The positive participation reported in the current study could be improved by passing policies to support women with low education attainment.

As Ryder (2020) observed, participation needs to be increased addressing institutional factors such as the length of sentence. Given that the current study has highlighted the potential of correctional education in enhancing the skills of incarcerated women, policymakers should review correctional departments' instructional and instructor policies to ensure women benefit from these programs. This is important because correctional programs were developed based on male prisoners rather than female prisoners (Eggleston et al., 2003). With the rapid growth of female offenders, there is increased awareness that the existing programs developed for male prisoners might not be effective with women prisoners (Eggleston et al., 2003). Currently, women constitute 222,455 (7%) of the two million incarcerated people in the U.S. (Hicks-Becton et al., 2022).

Lastly, the government and the criminal justice system should ensure adequate funding for women's prisons to equip learning facilities, materials, and libraries for different correctional programs to cater to prisoners with different education or learning interests. The value that women attach to correctional education programs indicate that Pell Grants and the New York state's tuition assistance program (TAP) for incarcerated people should be extended to help women access correctional education programs offered by colleges such as The State University

of New York (The State University of New York, 2023). This is important because college education is challenging for incarcerated individuals who only depend on highly selective private grants. After all, incarcerated individuals were banned from state and federal grants (Gibbons, 2020). Therefore, the existing opportunities cannot meet the educational needs of women prisoners who enter prison with diverse educational needs based on their education level and preferences, including earning high school diplomas and life-skills or vocational skills that could help them avoid criminal activity post-release, aid family reunification, and create job opportunities.

Implications for Further Research

The findings presented in this study underscore the importance of examining factors that underlie women prisoners' motivation to participate in correctional education programs to adapt those programs to their needs and interests. Further research should consider longitudinal data to explore the stability of women prisoners' motivation and whether that motivation changes over time.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should consider collecting data from the same female participants over a more extended period to generate generalizable results. Manger et al. (2020) reported that longitudinal data could be useful in exploring the changes in prisoners' motivation to participate in correctional education programs and the factors responsible for those changes. For instance, imprisoned women may participate in correctional education programs due to pressure or court orders and then participate in the program because of personal factors (Manger et al., 2020). The current study findings provide a vague picture of the association between the value of correctional education programs and recidivism because it did not follow the participants for a long period nor was it longitudinal in nature to determine recidivism rates. As Byrne (2019)

stated, a conclusion regarding the recidivism reduction impact of correctional education programs requires continuous evaluation of the specific correctional programs. This is important because the evidence has demonstrated that incarcerated women's education aspirations vary from higher to vocational education.

Future research on the same topic should also consider using a larger sample drawn from various women's prisons to enhance the generalizability of findings to correctional education programs across all women's prisons. This study used a small sample size of formerly incarcerated women released from New York State jails and prisons within a time frame of five years, which affects the generalizability of the findings to the correctional education programs in other female correctional institutions across the United States.

Lastly, future research on the same topic should use mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative data to allow triangulation that could overcome the weakness of this qualitative approach. The formerly incarcerated women have varied experiences and feelings about correctional education programs, and thus, producing similar results would be impractical. Moreover, the use of interviews implies that desirability concerns affected the reliability of data collected. Therefore, if future studies combine quantitative and qualitative data to overcome social desirability.

This approach should also examine additional factors that impact the motivation of women prisoners to participate in correctional education programs. Also, the researcher's bias may have influenced the data because of the direct contact with participants during data collection (Mwita, 2022). It is widely recognized that the researcher's direct involvement with the participants during data collection consciously or subconsciously influences data collected in

qualitative studies (Mwita, 2022). Mwita (2022) adds that a researcher might be lured into understating or exaggerating something when identifying and interpreting themes from the data.

Limitations of Study

It is important to note that this study has limitations due to the small sample size of formerly incarcerated women who were interviewed. As qualitative research aims to examine the lives of a specific group in great detail, the sample is often small and chosen using purposeful sampling methods. However, using a small sample to collect rich qualitative information also limits the generalizability of the findings to the larger population. Although not generalizable beyond the sample in this study, the findings still provide useful insight. Further, the study is successful in giving formerly incarcerated women a voice on their educational interests, which was part of the study's intent.

Delimitations

Given that the study focused on the value of correctional education programs in reducing the likelihood of women offenders recidivating, the study was limited to the formerly incarcerated women released from a jail or prison in New York State within a five-year time frame. The scope of the study was limited to New York State since it is one of the strongest supporters of improving the correctional education programs for prisoners. This commitment made New York State the most relevant site for the study. It was limited to the formerly incarcerated women population of halfway houses in New York State, where offenders transition from correctional confinement into society. The findings may not seem generalizable, since the study focuses on the women population in New York State. However, the results can still provide useful insight and inform future researchers on the same topic in other states.

Summary

In sum, the study findings shed light on the value of formerly incarcerated women's participation in correctional education programs and the factors that motivated them. The findings demonstrate that formerly incarcerated women with low educational attainment due to troubled adolescence value correctional education programs for various reasons, including acquiring skills to secure employment and life enhancements post-release. It appears that most of the formerly incarcerated women's decision to participate in the programs was informed by the former troubled background associated with dropping out of school and being brought up by emotionally distant parents who seemed unconcerned with their children's wellbeing.

Many female participants in correctional facilities recognize the value of education in achieving gainful employment. As a result, they enroll in correctional education programs to develop academic, life, and vocational skills that will make them more employable after their release. This approach helps them avoid engaging in criminal activities and reduces the risk of recidivism. The decision to participate in these education programs is influenced by external factors such as future employment prospects, which align with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation concepts as explained by the self-determination theory.

The findings have practical and policy implications to help improve the educational programs in response to their needs and motivations. For instance, correctional educators could use this study's findings to design education programs responsive to incarcerated women's educational needs and preferences. The study's findings also emphasize the importance formerly incarcerated women place on correctional education programs. This suggests that correctional educators and reentry officials should establish policies to improve the effectiveness of these programs by addressing issues such as funding, instructional materials, and methods. Overall, despite some

limitations, such as sample size, the study provides critical insights that would serve as the basis for future studies investigating the relationship between education programs and reintegration/recidivism of women offenders' post-release.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

IRB Approval Form



February 7, 2023
Cassandra D. Garrett
Seton Hall University

Re: IRB # 2023-423

Dear Cassandra,

At its December meeting, the Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled, "Forgotten Population: The Value of Correctional Education Programs from the Lived Experiences, Perspectives and Viewpoints of Formerly Incarcerated Women" as submitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study's approval. Enclosed for your records are the stamped original Consent Form and recruitment flyer. You can make copies of these forms for your use.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Thank you for your cooperation.


Phyllis Bartoli, PhD, RN, DNSAP, FAAN
Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Office of the Institutional Review Board
Presidents Hall - 400 South Orange Avenue - South Orange, New Jersey 07079 - Tel: 973.275.4654 - Fax 973.275.2978 -
www.shu.edu

WHAT GREAT MINDS CAN DO

Appendix B
Recruitment Flyer

| | |
|---|--|
| <div>Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board FEB. 7 2023 Approval Date</div> <div>IRB Application Date FEB. 7 2024</div> | |
| <p>COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN SERVICES</p> <p>SETON HALL UNIVERSITY, NEW JERSEY</p> <p><u>VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY</u></p> <p>“Forgotten Population: The Value of Correctional Education Programs from the Lived Experiences, Perspectives and Viewpoints of Formerly Incarcerated Women”</p> <p>Types of Participants Needed</p> <p>Formerly Incarcerated Women released from a New York State Prison within the last five years (2017 – 2022), who participated in Correctional Education Programs.</p> <p>Purpose of the study: I am conducting a research study on The Value of Correctional Education Programs from the Lived Experiences, Perspectives and Viewpoints of Formerly Incarcerated Women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Semi-structured in-depth face-to-face, telephone or internet interviews.• Audio-Taped interview will be between 60 - 90 minutes long• No identifying information will be used• Information will be secure and stored for confidentiality• Participation is Voluntary <p>Researcher's Contact: cassandra.garrett@student.shu.edu [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> | |

Appendix C

Informed Consent



Informed Consent Form

Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board

FEB. 7 2023
Approval Date

Expiration Date
FEB. 7 2024

Title of Research Study: **Forgotten Population: The Value of Correctional Education Programs from the Lived Experiences, Perspectives and Viewpoints of Formerly Incarcerated Women**

Principal Investigator: Cassandra D. Garrett, Doctoral Candidate

Department Affiliation: Department of Education, Leadership, Management & Policy at Seton Hall University

Sponsor: This research is supported by the Department of Education, Leadership, Management & Policy at Seton Hall University.

Brief summary about this research study:

The following summary of this research study is to help you decide whether or not you want to participate in the study. You have the right to ask questions at any time.

The purpose of this study is to understand the value of correctional education programs in helping formerly incarcerated women reduce the likelihood of recidivism post-release. Qualitative data will be collected from the participants to understand the value of the correctional education programs offered to female prisoners while incarcerated in New York State prisons

You will be asked to complete a demographic survey to determine your eligibility to participate in the study. If you meet the criteria to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview which may be conducted via face-to-face, by telephone, or using Zoom or Teams. The interviews will be recorded.

We expect that you will be in this research study for one day and about 60 to 90 minutes in duration.

The primary risk of participation is minimal in nature. In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation, you may withdraw your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions that are intrusive or stressful.

The main benefit of participation is the study may help policymakers, and correctional stakeholders improve correctional education programs for women to facilitate successful reentry into society and address the recidivism problem.

Purpose of the research study:

You are being asked to take part in this research study because you meet the criteria of being: 1) 18 years old or older, 2) identify as woman, 3) formerly incarcerated in a New York State prison, 4) released from a New York State prison within the last five years (2017 – 2022), 5) participated in a correctional education program during their last incarceration and 6) are not currently incarcerated.

Your participation in this research study is expected to be for a one-day interview lasting between 60 to 90 minutes long.

You will be one of 10 to 25 people who are expected to participate in this research study.

What you will be asked to do:

Your participation in this research study will include: Participant's completion of a demographic questionnaire and participation in one digital audio recorded, in-depth, semi-structured interview to last

Adult Consent.v3.2021-2022



Informed Consent Form

between 60 to 90 minutes to be conducted by the researcher. The demographic questionnaire will focus on the number of times incarcerated in a jail or prison and the name of the institutions. The interview questions will focus on the participants' experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints of correctional education programs, specifically, the type of program participation, what motivated participation, the climate of the education program, and whether participation was valuable to post-release behavior and choices. The participant's information and identity will not be released. The participant will have the choice of completing the interview face-to-face, by telephone or using Zoom or Teams. If the participant chooses to conduct a face-to-face interview, the interview will be conducted in a discrete location that allows for privacy.

Interview Guide Instrument: Sample questions that will be asked each participant will include.

- What was your experience with school growing up?
- Tell me a little information about what led to your last incarceration.
- What was the last facility you were incarcerated in?
- What type of correctional education programs were available during your incarceration?
- Tell me about the motivating factors that prompted you to want to participate in correctional education programs.
- What challenges or barriers did you experience during your participation in the program?
- You are currently not incarcerated; do you believe participating in correctional education programs were valuable to your post-release behavior and choices?

Your rights to participate, say no or withdraw:

Participation in the research is strictly voluntary. You can decide to participate or not to participate. You can choose to participate in the research study now and then decide to leave the research at any time.

Potential benefits:

There may be no direct benefit to you from this study. You may obtain personal satisfaction from knowing that you are participating in a project that contributes to new information.

Potential risks:

The risks associated with this study are minimal in nature. Your participation in this research may include minor stress that can be encountered when revisiting past experiences with incarceration. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

Confidentiality and privacy:

Efforts will be made to limit the use or disclosure of your personal information. This information may include the research study documents or other source documents used for the purpose of conducting the study. These documents may include the demographic questionnaire, interview transcripts and audio recordings. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that oversee research safety may inspect and copy your information. This includes the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board who oversees the safe and ethical conduct of research at this institution.

Data sharing:

Data collected from this study will not be shared with anyone outside of the study team.

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Informed Consent Form

Cost and compensation:

You will not be responsible for any of the costs or expenses associated with your participation in this study.

There is no payment for your time to participate in this study.

Conflict of interest disclosure:

The principal investigator and members of the study team have no financial conflicts of interest to report.

Contact information:

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this research project, you can contact the principal investigator Cassandra D. Garrett at cassandra.garrett@student.shu.edu, The Dissertation Mentor, Dr. Manuel F. Gonzalez, can be reached at manuel.gonzalez@shu.edu or the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board ("IRB") at (973) 761-9334 or irb@shu.edu.

Consent for Recording:

Audio and/or video recordings will be performed as part of the research study. Please indicate your permission to participate in these activities by placing your initials next to each activity.

I agree I disagree

_____ _____ The researcher may record my [audio or video] interview. In understand
this is done to help with data collection and analysis. The researcher will
not share these recordings with anyone outside of the study team.

I hereby consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Appendix D

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for participating in this study, Forgotten Population: The Value of Correctional Education Programs from the Lived Experiences, and Perspectives of Formerly Incarcerated Women in New York State.

To facilitate the interview, please fill out the Demographic Questionnaire. Please note any identifiable information will be kept confidential.

1. First Name: _____

2. Age: _____

(must be 18 years old or older to participate)

3. Gender (Must self-identify as woman to participate): _____

4. Place of birth: _____

4. Race or Ethnicity: _____

7. What religion are you affiliated with, if any? _____

8. Marital Status: __Single __Partnered __Married __Widowed __Separated __Divorced

9. Do you have any children? If "Yes," how many and what gender?

a. Yes _____

b. No _____

11. Please indicate your highest level of education completed. _____

12. Please indicate the highest level of education completed by your parents or guardian(s):

a. Father: _____

b. Mother: _____

c. Guardian(s): _____

13. How many times have you been incarcerated in a New York State Jail? _____
14. How many times have you been incarcerated in a New York State Prison? _____
15. What year were you released from the New York State Prison system? (Must have been released between 2017 – 2022 to participate) _____
16. Did you participate in correctional education programs during anytime of your incarceration?
If "Yes," at what facility _____ (Must have participated in correctional education programs)

Thank you for filling out this questionnaire.

Appendix E

Interview Guide

Participant Pseudonym _____

Interview Date _____ Start Time _____ End Time _____ Location _____

| Interview Questions | Research questions addressed |
|--|---|
| 1. Can you tell me about yourself, where you grew up, and where you went to school? 2. What was your experience with school growing up? (<i>Probe for specific experiences with educators, peers, school sports, and activities.</i>) 3. Tell me about what led to your last incarceration. | Background/icebreaker questions demographic information and background of schooling before imprisonment. To establish background contexts (age, ethnicity, family, education level, number of years incarcerated). |
| 4. What type of correctional education programs were available during your incarceration? (<i>Probe for specific activities and certification programs</i>) 5. What type of correctional education program(s) did you participate in? 6. Tell me about the motivating factors that prompted you to want to participate in correctional education programs. | What were the motivating factors for your involvement in correctional education programs? Stories on the ability to receive resources to help with re-entry support to break the cycle of incarceration. |
| 7. Describe the a) your experiences with the educational program? a) educational climate and b) facility climate 8. What challenges or barriers did you experience during your participation in the program? 9. How long did you participate in the education program? 10. What factors or experiences contributed to your progress or failure to complete the program? | What was the experiences and perceptions of correctional education programs while incarcerated? Designed to extract stories of difficulties/barriers (social, academic, financial, length of incarceration) or success in completing a correctional education program. |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>11. You are currently not incarcerated; do you believe participating in correctional education programs were valuable to your post-release behavior and choices?</p> <p>12. Are you currently employed? Do you think the education programs helped motivate you towards seeking employment?</p> <p>13. Do you think providing education programs to incarcerated women matters and supports reintegration?</p> <p>14. If you were given a chance to enhance a specific educational program, which one would it be?</p> | <p>Do formerly incarcerated women believe that participation in correctional education programs were valuable to their post-release behavior and choices?</p> <p>Do formerly incarcerated women believe that participation in correctional education programs were valuable to their post-release behavior and choices?</p> <p>Stories illustrating the process of selecting behaviors to desist from criminal activity. When did the participant know to deploy protective factors to remove themselves from negative influences?</p> |
| <p>15. Do you have any questions for me regarding this interview, or is there something you would have wanted me to ask you regarding your experience with correctional education programs as a formerly incarcerated woman?</p> <p>16. If I need to clarify any of your responses, may I contact you?</p> | <p>Interview Wrap Up</p> <hr/> <p>Opportunity to share additional comments or elaborate on anything already shared.</p> <p>Opportunity to correct any misinterpretation or make additional comments.</p> |

Notes: