IDENTIFYING THE PRACTICES THAT REDUCE CRIMINALITY THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED POST-SECONDARY CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Interdisciplinary Leadership

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Abstract

The qualitative case study comparison of seven community-based post-secondary correctional education (CBPSCE) programs within the United States identified specific program characteristics and practices that may contribute to the reduction of criminal behavior. Participants selected were school administrators, program directors, and faculty. These subject matter experts were interviewed regarding their insight and experience in post-secondary correctional education offered within the community. The study comparison yielded five themes: a) culture, b) role of faculty and school administrators, c) instructional strategies and curricula, d) student support and academic services, and e) reentry services. Each theme influenced the successful matriculation, retention, and transition back into society for those who have left prison and are entering into post-secondary degree programs. From these findings, three tiered guidelines were created to assist CBPSCE directors and staff in operating successful programs that reduce the barriers that contribute to criminal behavior. The findings from this research indicated that success was not determined by a student’s decision to discontinue crime; success was found when students develop the life and academic skills needed to change their lives to break cycles of addiction and crime. Correctional education in the community is more about removing the barriers that men and women face upon return that tends to tempt them back into a criminal lifestyle. Nurturing the process for change through acceptance and re-identification is academic rehabilitation, the final stage of rehabilitation and the beginning steps towards successful reintegration.

Keywords: matriculation, correctional education, re-identification, rehabilitation
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Joe Rivera. You raised me to see the good in all things and to proceed in love. Words could never express how much you mean to me.

Te amo, daddy.
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To complete a life-long dream is neither easy nor achieved alone. I would not have completed this journey without the incredible guidance and expertise of my dissertation committee. To Dr. James R. Martin, my committee chair, thank you for being an incredible mentor. I knew I wanted you to chair my dissertation committee during the first class I had with you because I admired your intellect and presence. Dr. Leah Georges, my advisor and committee member, thank you for your expertise and the passion you always displayed towards my research. Dr. Isabelle Cherney, thank you for believing in me and allowing me to be a part of a wonderful program. You helped me to believe that strong leaders can lead with their heart and to you, I will be forever grateful.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Reducing Crime Through Community-based Post-Secondary Education

Increased prison populations and climbing recidivism rates equate to a national fiscal cost of 52 billion dollars a year (Pew Center on the States, 2011; Tolbert, 2012). Correspondingly, the United States has the highest prison population in the world (National Research Council, 2014; Walmsley, 2013; Yamatani & Spjeldnes, 2011). Research conducted by the Pew Center (2011) found that state spending on corrections quadrupled during the past two decades, making it the second fastest growing area of state budgets, trailing only Medicaid. However, 93 to 95% of incarcerated persons will eventually return to society (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011).

One of the most challenging reentry issues is in gaining employment. Individuals with previous convictions may lack the professional, technological, academic, and soft skills needed to acquire sustainable employment. Individuals who are involved in the justice system are significantly undereducated and have more learning disabilities compared to the general population (Iorizzo, 2012; Klein, Tolbert, Bugarin, Cataldi, & Tauschek, 2004; Patrick, 2015; Tolbert, 2012). Education, job training, and employment are amongst the needs of those who were previously incarcerated while reintegrating back into society and are commonly the same factors that influence post-conviction criminal activities (Nally, Lockwood, Knutson, & Ho, 2012; Tolbert, 2012).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014) reports the adult correctional systems supervised an estimated 6,851,000 persons in 2014. Studies suggest that offenders with post-secondary education are less likely to reoffend as their rates of recidivism decreased by 72 percent (Patrick, 2015). This sharply contrasts the likelihood of the previously
incarcerated individuals who obtained their general education diploma (GED) as half still return to prison (Klein et al., 2004).

Only six percent of all men and women serving a correctional sentence have access to post-secondary degree programs and are not on an educational pathway towards degree attainment (Castro, Brawn, Graves, Mayorga, & Page, 2015). This adds to the challenge of reintegrating people back into society and contributes to the high levels of reoffending that leads previously incarcerated men and women back into the prison system. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014) reports that nearly two-thirds (67.8%) of released prisoners were arrested for a new crime within three years, and three-quarters (76.6%) were arrested within five years. More than a third (36.8%) of all prisoners who were arrested within five years of release were arrested within the first six months after release, with more than half (56.7%) arrested by the end of the first year. A sixth (16.1%) of released prisoners were responsible for almost half (48.4%) of the nearly 1.2 million arrests that occurred in the five-year follow-up period.

Crime cannot be reduced without a community response that includes an educational component. A well-integrated collaborative community system increases the likelihood of successful reintegration for returning citizens (Yamatani & Spjeldnes, 2011). The conduction of an environmental scan uncovered less than 10 post-secondary institutions that offer correctional education outside of prison walls that transition the previously incarcerated into degree programs. Higher education reduces the likelihood of criminal behavior but has offered little explanation why (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, 2013; Davis, Steele, Bozick, Williams, Turner, Miles, Saunders & Steinberg, 2014; Klein et al., 2004; Tolbert, 2012). The purpose of this research was to conduct a
case study comparison of seven community-based post-secondary correctional education programs (CBPSCE) offered within the United States to identify specific program characteristics and practices that contributed to the reduction of criminal behavior. Through the use of interviews, these findings were used to guide academic institutions by offering best-practice guidelines for CBPSCE programming for those who are either serving community sentences or who have been previously incarcerated.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study comparison of CBPSCE programs within the United States was to identify specific program characteristics and practices that contributed to the reduction of criminal behavior. These findings were used to develop best-practice guidelines for CBPSCE programs designed to matriculate the previously incarcerated into degree programs.

**Research Question**

Offering CBPSCE programming is a fairly underused strategy aimed at transitioning men and women who have been previously incarcerated back into society while reducing criminal behavior. The following question guided this qualitative study:

“What are the perceptions of, and policies employed by, the leaders of community-based correctional education programs?”

**Significance of the Dissertation in Practice Study**

The state of corrections is failing to reduce post-conviction criminal behavior. Annually, 1.2 million people will be released from prison, and of those released, nearly 72% to 76.6% will return for new convictions (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015; Henderson, 2005; Patrick, 2015; The Pew Center, 2011).
Studies suggest that obtaining post-secondary education reduces recidivism by 72 percent (Batiuk, 1997; Chappel, 2004; Patrick, 2015). Subsequent studies have found that integration of collegiate curricula in correctional education substantially reduces future criminal behavior amongst high-risk offenders as they pursue higher degrees (Borden, Richardson, & Meyer, 2012, Davis et al., 2013; DiMambro, 2007; Hrabowski, & Robbi, 2002; McGuire, 1995; Nally et al., 2012; Tolbert & Rasmussen Foster, 2016; Williamson, 1992). Research also indicates that recruiting newly released inmates into post-secondary correctional education programs upon release decreases the likelihood of returning back to a criminal lifestyle (Tolbert, 2012).

Although any form of education, including a high school diploma or equivalency, has a positive impact in reducing criminal behavior, post-secondary education research has post-release outcomes extending beyond reduced recidivism, to include increased educational attainment levels, improved post-release employment opportunities and earnings, as well as aiding in the successful reentry back into society (Borden et al., 2012; Meyer, Fredericks, Borden, & Richardson, 2010; Patrick, 2015; Tolbert & Rasmussen Foster, 2016; Winterfield, Coggeshall, Burke-Storer, Correa, & Tidd, 2009). Since the United States incarcerates an estimated six million people, offering post-secondary correctional education will advance governmental and societal goals in broadening the tax base and by reducing public expenditures and reliance on public services such as welfare. To deny or limit access to higher education impacts the economic success of the United States (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011; Patrick, 2015).

Although research indicates post-secondary correctional education reduces criminal behavior, it has not identified what specific academic and program
characteristics contribute to this reduction (Klein et al., 2004; Meyer et al., 2010; Tolbert, 2012). Even less research has uncovered whether CBPSCE is successful in reducing criminal behavior.

The specific characteristics and practices of post-secondary correctional education programs are equally influential in reducing a student’s future criminal behavior. Specific characteristics and practices such as: environment, role of the faculty and school administrators, curricula, instructional strategies, student support and academic services, and supported transition. Education alone does not reduce the likelihood to commit future offenses. Instead, it provides the academic support and instruction required to pursue social aspirations (DiMambro, 2007; Gehring, 2000). Education increases one’s self-esteem and efficacy, thus reaffirming personal significance and responsibility to societal contributions. Further inquiry was needed to identify the program characteristics within the curricula and environment of community-based post-secondary correctional education that reduce criminal behavior (DiMambro, 2007; Tolbert, 2012).

Research reveals nine post-secondary institutions nationwide that offer community-based correctional education. These programs operate independently of one another, using a variety of approaches that achieve varying degrees of success. Findings from this research revealed five of the seven programs studied collected data reporting a decrease in their students returning back to the criminal justice system with new post-conviction offenses.

This study was significant to correctional education as it sought to identify the specific program characteristics and practices that contributed to the reduction of criminal behavior to create best-practices guidelines to not only ensure consistency amongst
currently existing programs, but to elicit nationwide replication of an evidence-based practices to reduce criminal behavior.

**Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study was to design best-practices guidelines to community-based post-secondary correctional education programming.

**Definitions**

**Andragogical**- methods or techniques tailored for adult learners.

**Antisocial personality disorder**- a disorder characterized by an inability to conform to social norms and have high levels of anger, impulsivity, irritability, aggressiveness, and irresponsibility with a restricted range of social problem-solving abilities (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 2000).

**Community-based facilities**- correctional facilities were classified as community-based if 50% or more of the residents were regularly permitted to leave, unaccompanied by facility staff to work or study in the community. Community-based facilities included entities such as halfway houses, residential treatment centers, restitution centers, and prerelease centers (Stephan, 2008).

**Community corrections**- criminal sanctions that involve community supervision of offenders, use correctional and program resources available in the community, and require offenders to abide by specified conditions to remain in the community (Seiter, 2008).

**Community supervision sentences**- judicial sentences allowing the convicted to reside within the community while serving their sentences.
**Correctional education**- any academic or vocational education (Career and Technical Education) program provided within a correctional facility or community-based setting specialized in working with people involved in the criminal justice system.

**Criminogenic**- any factors influencing future criminal acts and/or behavior.

**Evidence-based programming**- crime-fighting strategies that have been scientifically tested and based on social science research (Schmalleger, 2014).

**Felony**- a criminal offense punishable by death or by incarceration in a prison facility for at least one year (Schmalleger, 2014).

**Incapacitation**- the use of imprisonment or other means to reduce the likelihood that an offender will commit future offenses (Schmalleger, 2014).

**Offender**- a person convicted of committing an illegal act.

**Penologists**- researchers who primarily study prisons.

**Parole**- The status of a convicted offender who has been conditionally released from prison by a paroling authority before the expiration of his or her sentence and placed under the supervision of a parole agency, and is required to observe the conditions of parole.

**Parolees**- men and women serving a parole sentence.

**Post-secondary education**- formal education provided by community colleges, colleges, and universities to earn associate, bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees.

**Probation**- a sentence of imprisonment that is suspended. Also, the conditional freedom granted by a judicial officer to a convicted offender, as long as the person meets certain conditions of behavior (Schmalleger, 2014).

**Probationers**- men and women serving a probation sentence.
**Prosocial**- actions and behaviors that are beneficial to the larger society (Krisberg, Marchionna, & Hartney, 2015).

**Recidivism**- the repetition of criminal behavior. In statistical practice, a recidivism rate may be any of a number of possible counts or instances of arrest, conviction, correctional commitment, or correctional status change related to repetition of these events within a given period of time (Schmalleger, 2014). For the purposes of this research, recidivism is the conviction of a new offense post-conviction.

**Rehabilitation**- a programmed effort to alter the attitudes and behaviors of inmates and improve their likelihood of becoming law-abiding citizens (Seiter, 2008).

**Retribution**- the act of taking revenge on a criminal perpetrator.

**Sanction**- a penalty for disobeying a law or judicial condition.

**Sentencing**- the imposition of a criminal sanction by a judicial authority.

**Service learning**- learning by providing community and voluntary services to others.

**Technical violations**- violations of conditions of community supervision with commission of a new crime (Seiter, 2008).

**Methodology for Collecting Information about the Dissertation in Practice Problem**

The conduction of an environmental scan revealed there are fewer than ten CBPSCE programs located within the United States. All programs were invited to participate to avoid selection bias. Faculty and school leaders were the subject matter experts qualified to participate in explaining what strategies are employed that contributed to the reduction of criminal behavior. Students are a protected population and were excluded from the study.
Artifacts of the history, background, and chronological events of each program, including documents such as mission and vision statements, brochures, class syllabi, and past studies conducted by social scientists were reviewed. Archival records such as annual reports containing information on enrollment, completion rates, and statistical data were requested. Audio visuals such as webinars, video interviews, and digital recordings were also reviewed.

As noted, seven agencies were interviewed, which included faculty and school administrators. Each participant received a letter requesting their voluntary participation outlining the process, and assuring the participants information would remain confidential and could withdraw at any point. To allow time for reflection, faculty received the questions prior to the scheduled interview. Each interview was digitally recorded, transcribed, and returned to the participant for verification of accuracy and certification of authenticity.

**Delimitations**

The delimitations of conducting a case study comparison were set in the criteria of what programs qualified for the study. Only programs that offer community-based postsecondary correctional education to adults who were formally incarcerated or who are currently serving a probation, community corrections, or parole sentence were included in this study. Post-secondary correctional education programs offered in prison were not included in this study.

Community-based correctional education programs that offer general education diplomas were not included in this study in order to focus on the impact of post-secondary education and how it contributed to the reduction of criminal behavior. The
GED is a state board of education high school equivalency examination used as the qualifying instrument for the award of a high school equivalency diploma (Colorado Department of Education, 2014). The focus of this study examined how higher education extending from a general high school diploma influenced future criminal behavior.

**Limitations**

The limitations of the study were in the sample size and characteristics of the programs being studied. There are only 9 programs that offer adult post-secondary correctional education in community settings so the impact of their services will be limited to adults. Participants invited to participate were the school leaders and faculty who have created and currently offer CBPSCE programming.

Although the variance between students and faculty and administrators would have enriched the perspectives on what program practices and characteristics were successful in contributing to the reduction of recidivism, those who are serving judicial sentences are a vulnerable population. The nature of the students as a potentially vulnerable population led to a practical decision to interview faculty and administrators.

Due to the nature of the programs being studied, there were no means to control for the motivation of students as these men and women voluntarily sought these collegiate programs and were not court ordered to fulfill a state requirement. All students enter into these programs with an identified motivation to pursue rehabilitation through academic venues (Davis et al., 2013).

The term recidivism varied in its operative definition and failed to have a universal definition. Some programs viewed recidivism as the *commission* of a new offense while other programs defined recidivism as the commission of a technical
violation while serving a community sentence. The most accurate definition of recidivism is the *conviction* of a new offense post-conviction. Recidivism rates are typically only tracked for three years after sentencing, which also varied between programs. Success is normally defined by measuring recidivism within the Criminal Justice system although many programs chose to measure success differently and did not maintain data on the recidivism rates of their students. The variation in the use of recidivism rates, the definition of recidivism, and time frames used to track recidivism were limitations in this study as it varied between each program. The purposes of this research focused on the processes that faculty and administrators found helpful in reducing recidivism through their programs. In other words, this study is not a study of outcome but one of process.

**Personal Bias**

The researcher involved in this study acknowledges personal bias due to having over 20 years of experience in working for criminal justice organizations as a probation officer and for the Department of Justice. As a probation officer, this researcher participated in the effective supervision and containment of high-risk men serving probation sentences. Additionally, this researcher worked with students who had previous convictions who were enrolled in post-secondary institutions and served as a faculty member in a community-based program between 2013 and 2015.

Aside from working within the criminal justice community, this researcher is also a criminal justice affiliate faculty in a university and has been since 2006. This has enabled this researcher to not only experience teaching in a collegiate setting, it has offered years of specialized trainings and certifications focused on differentiated learning for diverse learners, the Gifted, as well as for English-language learners. Having over 20
years of professional training and experience in working with rehabilitative and learning strategies, this researcher was able to apply the knowledge attained in how to educate and rehabilitate through the use of evidence-based practices.

This researcher spent two years working for and observing the daily activities and events of one of the participating programs. Employment was self-terminated one year prior to the interviews to eliminate bias. Within the two years of volunteering and then working for this agency, the researcher was able to extensively observe the environment and culture of community-based correctional education. Observations were never recorded and interviews for research were not taken until IRB approval.

Bias was controlled by utilizing methods that eliminated selection bias and in the transparent methodology design. Exploring and strategizing bracketing though reflection and journaling was practiced in order to mitigate the potential transmission of bias, personal assumptions, and connection to the topic. By sorting out the qualities that belonged to the researcher’s experience, rigor was ensured. This researcher also selected mentors who were less emotionally invested to maintain objectivity.

**The Role of Leadership in this Study**

The criminal justice system was created based on retributive beliefs that a person’s behavior is corrected when they are punished (Schmalleger, 2014). The ideology of this dissertation in practice requires leadership that will change from a punitive model to an approach emphasizing rehabilitation (Klein et al., 2004).

Reliance upon incarceration has destructive effects that may be avoided by widening the net of sentencing options to include an amalgam of distributive and procedural justice techniques (Haslam, 2011). Researching whether or not higher
education can transform the criminal mentality through a collegiate setting, rather than an incapacitated one, is of value to the future of corrections. Strategic leadership should seek to assess the potential of post-secondary correctional education programs in reshaping the worldview of men and women who were previously incarcerated, thus potentially leading them to opportunities where they can be more productive members of society. Authentic leadership is illustrated when leaders empower followers to work for the greater good and not solely for their own personal needs (Lowney, 2003). The exchange is not transactional, but rather transformational. The role of my research was to observe and analyze how a correctional approach can elicit intrinsic motivation through higher order critical thinking and strategic reflection and determine whether there can be a transformation of their sense of self as they come to understand their higher sense of purpose towards others.

A sense of self is derived from group membership where the meanings, norms, and mores are defined and attached to that alliance. Individuals will define themselves based on that group membership and act accordingly (Haslam, 2011). Critical observation and evaluation will determine whether facilitated learning and introspection required to transform their sense of identity is more likely to occur in academic settings than in an incapacitated one. For men and women who committed non-violent offenses, a community supervision sentence affords the opportunity to recreate their sense of identity as they come to identify with a new group of academic associates. To avoid further criminal networking and membership, students are given the opportunity to cut ties with old criminal affiliates and establish more proactive and prosocial ones.
The idea of offering collegiate education to the post-convicted is often met with strong resistance by the majority of citizens who are against offering expensive education that is not free to law-abiding citizens (Grasgreen, 2015). Confronting this legitimate resistance will require rigorous research to assist in making an informed decision in how to proceed with educational funding. Concerned taxpayers and politicians need research that addresses their concerns and can provide the data to validate whether or not there is a value in offering collegiate education to those who have been convicted of crimes.

System officials are approached with many ideas of what will “cure” criminal behavior and lower the rate of incarceration. The approach must be well thought out and supported by well-researched evidence. The results yielded in this research will better assist correctional leaders in their approach to post-secondary education.

Summary

Increased prison populations and climbing recidivism rates equate to a national fiscal cost of 52 billion dollars a year (The Pew Center, 2011). Crime cannot be reduced without a community response that includes academic intervention. The purpose of this qualitative study was to conduct a case study comparison of community-based post-secondary correctional education programs within the United States to identify specific program characteristics and practices that may contribute to the reduction of criminal behavior. This study is significant to correctional education as it sought to identify the specific program practices within the curricula and environment that contribute to the reduction of criminal behavior to create best-practice guidelines for community-based correctional education programming.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014) reports the adult correctional system supervised an estimated 6,851,000 persons in 2014. Over seven million people serve community sentences such as probation, jail, community corrections, and parole. Most of these men and women are ill prepared to handle the challenges of transitioning back into the work force due to high levels of illiteracy, lack of cognitive skills, and learning disabilities (Davis et al., 2013; Iorizzo, 2012; Tolbert, 2012; Patrick, 2015).

The purpose of this research was to conduct a case study comparison of community-based post-secondary correctional education (CBPSCE) programs offered within the United States. The findings from conducted interviews were used to develop evidence-based guidelines for CBPSCE programming.

The Literature Review

This section examines the findings on the relationship between education and recidivism rates. Research supports the academic and operative practices within education in decreasing criminal behavior. The operative factors within education that contribute to the reduction of criminal behavior: environment, role of the faculty and school administrators, curricula, instructional strategies, student support and academic services, and supported transition. Correctional models of academic instruction offering cognitive-behavioral and holistic approaches to correcting criminal behavior will be identified. Ross and Fabiano’s (1985) cognitive model of delinquency prevention and offender rehabilitation and Bonta’s and Andrews’ (2010) risk-needs-responsivity (RNR) model and personal, interpersonal, and community reinforcement (PIC-R) model will be
used to examine how cognitive-behavioral curricula offered through an andragogical approach are influential factors that lead to success and contribute to reduced recidivism.

Finally, theoretical perspectives by Mezirow (1997) and his theory on transformative learning and DiMambro’s (2007) regenerative theory will be examined as possible explanations as to why these identified practices reduce criminal propensities. Ryan and Deci’s (2000) theory of self-determination offers explanation into how self-motivation, social development, and personal well-being are influenced by three needs: the need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy.

The Relationship Between Education and Recidivism Rates

Penitentiaries offered education programs to men and women in prisons prior to 1980, however it was not until the 1980’s that correctional education research focused on the impact of education programs on recidivism (Tracy & Steurer, 1995). Recidivism occurs when the previously convicted commit criminal offenses that result in rearrests and reconvictions within three years of release (U.S Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009). The following section presents research in light of these education programs.

The commission of a new offense post-conviction is the most frequently used measurement of success by penologists studying correctional education (Davis et al., 2013; Gehring, 2000). The rationale for reducing recidivism as a means to measure success is an important site of political and ideological argument because it controls the scope of educational possibilities (Castro, Brawn, Graves, Mayorga, & Page, 2015). Using recidivism to measure correctional education success has elicited debate as to whether or not it is effective criterion. Recidivism data in one study are often not comparable to the data in another due to varied definitions (Gehring, 2000; McShane &
This section will address the ambiguity in definitions used in prior research, the concerns and limitations in using recidivism as criterion to determine success, as well as illustrate past research that has substantiated the relationship between education and recidivism.

Recidivism and the various ways it has been defined has contributed towards the movement of social scientists challenging the way we measure success within correctional education (Castro et al., 2015). Correctional success must be redefined as recidivism is a difficult measure because there is no uniformly accepted definition of the term. The definition and measurement of recidivism is definitively unclear. A variety of definitions and methods are used across the literature (Davis et al., 2013; Gehring, 2000).

Several studies include re-arrest and probation/parole technical violations in their definitions of recidivism. The problem with including re-arrests is that an arrest may not lead to a new conviction. Technical violations violate the conditions of their supervision and are not new criminal law offenses (Gehring, 2000).

Recidivism is nebulous as a criterion to determine success as it only measures new convictions and not personal changes and improvement (Castro et al., 2015; DiMambro, 2007; Gehring, 2000). To only validate correctional education as successful if a person with previous offenses does not reoffend ignores that he or she may have made other lifestyle improvements such as obtaining post-secondary education, abstaining from drugs and alcohol, or developing healthy parenting practices. It also limits the academic possibilities that one might have access to while under correctional supervision (Castro et al., 2015). If the only goal is to reduce recidivism, the focus of course offerings will center on vocational certificates that offer a living and lose sight of
liberal arts degrees that offer a life enriched with critical thinking and the transcendent perception of one’s sense of purpose in the world. Moving beyond a recidivist paradigm allows correction education leaders to regard the person as solely student who has future propensities to succeed in lifestyle changes, and not just in committing crimes.

The broad definition of recidivism blurs the severity of reoffending by measuring all convictions and does not distinguish between levels of severity in reoffending. As an example, a person whose original offense was murder who has recently been reconvicted for speeding is classified as a recidivist (Gehring, 2000). Failure to distinguish felonious offenses from traffic offenses dilutes the significance in using recidivism as criterion to measure correctional education effectiveness.

Regardless of how we define recidivism, there is a significant relationship between recidivism and education. The relationship between crime and recidivism has been challenged due to the self-selection bias that naturally occurs when researching prison populations. Rigorous research addressing the limitation of bias conducted by Kim and Clark (2013) validated the relationship between education and recidivism and concluded that prison-based college education significantly reduces recidivism.

Since 1980, researchers have found a positive relationship between increased education and reduced criminal behavior beginning with the impact education has from obtaining a general education diploma to men and women in prison who obtain post-secondary education by completing graduate degrees. Studies have generally found that participants in correctional educational programs have lower recidivism rates, as well as higher employment rates after release (Davis et al., 2013; Duguid, 1997; Nally et al., 2012; Patrick, 2015; Tolbert, 2012; Tolbert & Rasmussen Foster, 2016). Only a few
studies have focused on prison-based college programs but agree that college programming in prison is correlated with a reduction in commission of new offenses (Batiuk, Moke, & Rountree, 1997; Davis et al., 2013; Duguid, 1997; Nally et al., 2012; Patrick, 2015; Tolbert & Rasmussen Foster, 2016; Winterfield et al., 2009).

Academic success, completion, and length of program have been factors that reduce criminal behavior. Recent research finds that academic success is a better predictor of recidivism (Castro et al., 2015; DiMambro, 2007). Program completion is equally impactful on reduced recidivism rates (Tolbert, 2012). The longer students remain in school, the less likely they are to commit crimes within the first year of their release from prison (Craddock, 2008; Tolbert, 2012; Zhang, Roberts, & Callanan, 2006).

The United States Department of Education found that most incarcerated individuals enter into prison without a general education diploma (GED) and have never been exposed to the same socioeconomic benefits as those with a high school diploma or post-secondary education (Klein et al., 2004).

Although research concludes that higher education reduces crime convictions, there is little research that suggests education is rehabilitative (Frank, Omstead, & Pigg, 2012; Meyer et al., 2010; Tolbert, 2012). Skill development and degree attainment are significant to reducing the barriers men and women with previous convictions face by elevating their abilities and opportunities to succeed. But what transforms students into individuals who see themselves as doers for the greater good?

What remains unknown to research are the specific characteristics within post-secondary degree programs offered outside of prison walls that mitigate criminal propensity and habilitate the mind and heart. Post-secondary correctional education
encompasses any academic and vocational coursework earned after a high school
diploma or equivalent that can be used towards a vocational certificate or licensure and/or
an associates, bachelors, or graduate degree (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011). There is a need
to identify and provide a theoretical understanding of best practices for future
development and replication of programs. Few studies have examined the
implementation of postsecondary education programs and fewer still have sought to
relate implementation components to participant outcomes (Davis et al., 2013;
DiMambro, 2007; Frank et al., 2012; Klein et al., 2004; Meyer et al., 2010).

**Evidence-based Practices in Correctional Education**

Education alone will not correct behavior enough to reduce crime, however, the
academic and operative characteristics within education are significant and influential.
Characteristics such as the environment, role of the faculty and school administrators,
curricula and instructional strategies, student support and academic services, and
supported transition are significant to the academic rehabilitative process.

**Role of the Instructor: The Andragogical Approach**

Programs must hire and train staff to embody the program’s mission and have the
ability to effectively address the specialized needs of men and women who have previous
convictions. Correctional educators must be empathetic and non-judgmental and must be
trained in correctional academic strategies that will effectively address specific needs
such as illiteracy, poor cognitive functioning, mental illnesses, and lack of technological
and social proficiency skills.

Correctional programs that are effective have instructors who demonstrate the
ability to integrate basic skills development with life skills development in a supportive
environment that reinforces positive behaviors by role modeling strong social mores. This calls for an instructor who will lead with an interactive, student-centered approach.

Andragogical style learning is advised in order to involve the students in every phase of the learning process. Students who actively participate and take ownership in the learning process create an environment characterized by mutual trust, respect, and shared responsibilities (Bergevin, 1967; Knowles, 1971; Lindemann, 1926).

Instructors who use a multimodal approach that addresses a continuum of skills will comprehensively address the student’s social, cognitive, and moral deficits. Allowing students to practice constructively in handling situations while using newly acquired skills better prepares the student in future situations. This preparation may be critical in sustaining law-abiding lifestyles and transitioning the post-incarcerated back into society (Brazao, Motta, & Rijo, 2013; MacKenzie, 2012; Tolbert, 2012).

The cognitive model of delinquency prevention and offender rehabilitation focuses on social competence, coping behaviors, moral development, self-regulation, and empathy integrated into curricula (Ross & Fabiano, 1985). This holistic approach assigns the facilitator the role of creating scenarios for role-playing. Converging real life with experiential learning elicits the reflection and understanding of how individuals with criminal histories think (not what they think) about the world that contributes to their criminality (Samenow, 1991; Swanson, 2009; Wright, 1997).

Experientially-based instruction connecting the participant’s past experiences with others who have overcome similar adversity helps the previously incarcerated develop discrepancy between their current status with the type of person they wish to become. Integrating holistic and process-based curricula that address real life issues
through experiential learning validate the student’s experiences and create an environment where they can constructively change their situations (Brazao, Da Motta, & Rijo, 2013; Wright, 1997).

Educators must also create a safe and welcoming environment that projects a sense of belongingness and hope (Tolbert, 2012). Many men and women with previous convictions are ostracized from society due to their criminal history and carry a great deal of anxiety. Creating a safe environment gives them a safe place to transition into society.

**The Environment and Supported Transition**

Tailoring teaching methodologies and curricula to the students’ experiences conveys a message to the post-convicted as student that they are equally capable of earning a quality education, thus reducing the shame they may carry in having academic deficiencies. Offering specialized curricula to meet the specific needs of the students creates a welcoming environment, invites a sense of belonging while inspiring hope that redirects their lives in a more productive and socially acceptable manner (Tolbert, 2012).

Offering correctional education to those who have been previously incarcerated while they are in society fosters not only an academic learning environment, but also establishes a venue in which they can process through life crisis in a collaborative and supportive environment. In order for change to occur, students need to experience the productive resolution of crisis (Habermas, 1974; Swanson, 2009). Overcoming crisis outside of their comfort zones and away from criminal networks, further develops maturity, restructures meaning systems, and facilitates dialogue that makes perceptions of self and reality transparent for reflection and interpretation. Students may be more
willingly to try new ways of resolving conflict if they are in a safe environment where failure does not equate to punitive sanctions or increased restrictions (Tolbert, 2012).

Content must be meaningful and relevant and able to address the concerns the post-convicted have related to their own lives. Post-convicted students need information that addresses familial dysfunction, violence, and substance abuse as part of their curricula to better prepare them to live law-abiding lifestyles (Tolbert, 2012; Wright, 1997). As an example, a community-based correctional education program requires their students to read *A Man’s Search for Meaning*, by Viktor Frankl. Facilitated by the instructor, students embark on a semester-long reflection into Frankl’s experiences as a prisoner in a concentration camp. Being able to identify with Frankl’s experiences on some level, students begin to make sense of how the perceptions of their experiences shape their futures. They also come to understanding of how their own incarcerative experiences have led them to find their own purpose and meaning in life.

Curricula and instructional strategies that provide specialized services for the learning disabled have also been found to reduce recidivism. According to the Prison Reform Trust (2010), between 20 to 30 percent of people involved in the justice system had learning disabilities or borderline learning disabilities and had a 61 percent recidivism rate (Cooney & Braggins, 2010). In a study conducted by the United States Department of Education (2004), incarcerated adults have the highest illiteracy and learning disability rates than any other population within the United States. The National Adult Literacy Survey (NAL) conducted in 1992 suggested that men and women in prison are more likely to have linguistic difficulties then the general population. When tested, over 70 percent of those incarcerated scored at the lowest level of literacy,
compared to 48 percent of adults within the general population. NAL also published findings that 11 percent of those incarcerated had some form of learning disability compared to the three percent of the general population (Klein et al., 2004). Men and women who participated in programs modified to accommodate learning disabilities were better equipped to acknowledge the seriousness of their offenses and developed a more socialized attitude (Iorizzo, 2012). Incorporating support and instructional strategies help students in cognitively processing through academic rigor and enables them to provide a better response to the cognitive behavioral strategies used to reduce criminal thinking.

Structuring correctional education to have the academic support required to succeed is significant to the rehabilitative process. Students who were supported by tutors, peer mentors, and study groups progressed academically and completed their studies successfully.

Students had lower rates of reoffending compared to those who only participated and did not finish and or did not have high academic successes (DiMambro, 2007). Peer mentoring has been proven effective in student success and academic progress (Bloom, Redcross, Zweig, & Azurdia, 2007; Tolbert, 2012). For instance, tutors are able to work individually with students to scaffold writing skills, as well as address correction-specific needs such as having limited proficiency in technology.

By identifying the essential needs of the post-convicted and facilitating a safe environment, students can reflect and cognitively process through behavioral changes. In his research, Duguid (1997) asserts that the mechanism of change is not in the actual curricula, but the level of involvement. He concluded that intensive participation is significant to sustained behavioral changes. Students must become invested in their
learning and empowered to become agents of their own change. Habilitating the entirety of a person by meeting the post-convicted where they are morally, intellectually, and emotionally may create a desire to pursue higher education.

**The Curricula and Instructional Strategies**

Curricula guiding cognitive-behavioral reasoning, social and emotional development, and eliciting civic obligation are important components to the functionality of correctional education (Brazao et al., 2013; Frank et al., 2012; Tolbert, 2012; Vaske, Galyean, & Cullen, 2011; Wright, 1997). A multimodal approach to correctional education that includes curricula aimed at academic, social, and emotional development was proven to be twice as successful in reducing criminal behavior when cognitive development was included (Brazao et al., 2013; MacKenzie, 2012; Tolbert, 2012).

In order to appeal to the student, correctional education must be process-oriented (rather than content-oriented) experientially based, and meaningful (Brazao et al., 2013; Frank et al., 2012; Ross & Fabiano, 1985; Tolbert, 2012; Wright, 1997). As an example, curricula that require a student to reflect, deliberate, and process through the adversity of another person’s experiences similar to their own fosters understanding, empathy, and insightfulness that aid in influencing future non-criminogenic decisions.

Curricula content that address the cognitive, criminogenic need, and civic development of the post-convicted through an andragogical and service-learning approach are more influential in reducing criminal behavior. Criminogenic meaning, factors directly related to recidivism outcomes (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990; Bonta & Andrews, 2010; Tolbert, 2012).
Exposing the post-convicted to correctional education centered on social competence, accountability, and cognitive development guides students in learning to abstain from impulsivity and calculate the consequences of their behaviors prior to acting (Ross & Fabiano, 1985). Andrews and Bonta (2003, 2006) created the personal, interpersonal, and community reinforcement (PIC-R) model theorizing how a person’s self-control directly relates to their ability to monitor, evaluate, and deliver self-instructions. Self-control also influences how a person copes with temptations and self-delivers meaningful consequences. Understanding personal attitudes, values, beliefs, rationalizations, cognitive-emotional states, and relationships with peers and family gives insight into how well the post-convicted will employ self-control.

Human behavior is influenced and motivated by family, marital relationships, school/work, and leisure/recreation, all of which either serve as reinforcements or controls (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, 2006). The post-convicted develop cognitively in response to their own upbringings, backgrounds, and environments. How the post-convicted perceive the world and give meaning to the messages they are given determines their responses (Brazao et al., 2013; Ross & Fabiano, 1985; Wright, 1997). When students identify their own sources of influences and motivations for their past decisions they are better equipped to accept responsibility for their actions and accept accountability for future actions. Critical reflection into one’s past patterns of self-control based on incentives and consequences begins the practice of self-regulation.

Assisting in the development and recognition of empathy towards others through connectedness and relationships while teaching effective conflict resolution are also important components in correctional education (Ross & Fabiano, 1985). Teaching from
a global perspective broadens students’ social perspectives and transforms their egocentric views into seeing their obligations to the world.

Reducing recidivism can be achieved by incorporating a governance structure that motivates students to participate in the classroom, as well as in the administration of the program. This structure should encourage volunteerism in extracurricular activities (Duguid, 1997; Tolbert, 2012).

Service learning is the missing link between academic knowledge and its application towards civic responsibility (Frank et al., 2012). In their study, Frank et al. (2012) observed post-convicted men who expressed a strong desire to become more civically engaged by participating in the program SLICE (Service-Learning in Correctional Education). Created in the fall of 2010, SLICE was a service-learning pilot program aimed at college-level men serving their sentence in a maximum-security prison (Frank et al., 2012). SLICE afforded the opportunity for men to participate in service projects for the greater good in a semester-long course. In this process, students reported feeling a higher sense of self-awareness, as well as an improved sense of the well-being in others. Their contribution to the community validated their worth, which in turn improved their self-confidence and leadership skills. Students were able to grow away from the convict mentality and into civically responsible individuals (Frank et al., 2012; Patrick, 2015; Swanson, 2009). This process became regenerative as the community began to see their service and leadership in the community, thus building trust and belief in men who had been previously ostracized and labeled as criminals.

The interplay of academia with human values in post-secondary education enlightens the criminal mind thus habilitating the post-convicted as students into
productive, empathetic citizens who understand their global responsibilities (Patrick, 2015; Swanson, 2009; Wright, 1997). Students who participate in CBT through CBPSCE programming are more likely to reintegrate back into society in a more cognitive and rational manner using acquired thinking and reasoning skills than ones who do not.

**Cognitive-behavioral Therapeutic Strategies**

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is the most successful form of treatment used to reduce reoffending because it targets the antisocial attitudes, behaviors, cognitions, and lifestyle patterns associated with criminal behaviors (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Lipsey, 1995; Tolbert, 2012; Vaske et al., 2011). Antisocial personality disorder is a disorder characterized by an inability to conform to social norms and has the potential to display high levels of anger, impulsivity, irritability, aggressiveness, and irresponsibility within a restricted range of social problem-solving abilities (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 2000). This disorder is highly prevalent within the prison system. 63 percent of male prisoners and 31 percent of female offenders have been diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder (Singleton, Meltzer, Gatward, Coid & Deasy, 1998).

The three key components of CBT as it relates to criminal reoffending are: (1) identifying high-risk situations, thoughts, and feeling that can lead to criminal and antisocial behavior, (2) helping clients replace criminogenic thoughts with law-abiding ones, (3) reducing deficits in cognitive processes that are linked to offending (problem-solving skills, coping skills, and social skills) (Vaske et al., 2011).

Cognitive restructuring practices prompts students to acknowledge the content of their criminal beliefs and create self-interventions, thus building the capacity to improve decision-making, evaluate the consequences of their actions, control impulsivity, and
strengthen problem-solving skills (Vaske et al., 2011). Through a structured and sequenced series of exercises, enhanced thinking skills are one of the most widely used cognitive skill interventions as it seeks to change the student’s way of thinking and behaving (Clark, 2000).

Within CBT, there are three domains of skills: (1) *social skills* – cognitive empathy, emotional empathy, self-awareness, moral reasoning, and moral feelings, (2) *coping skills* – self-regulation, reappraisal, and thought suppression, and (3) *problem-solving skills* - planning, anticipating outcomes, decision-making, and sense of agency (Vaske et al., 2011). Academic strategies focused in these areas target the deficits within the brain and reduce the impulse to criminally behave and reinforce newly acquired, prosocial reactions that are more constructive.

By focusing on impulsive reactions, CBT teaches students how to articulate a goal or problem, generate a plan, list all possible options, evaluate and choose an option or solution, and implement the solution. The availability to these skills sets decrease the likelihood of the impulsive decisions that generally lead to criminal responses.

The risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model of rehabilitation developed by Andrews et al., (1990, 2010) is one of the primary evidence-based frameworks used and is recognized for the cognitive-social-learning approaches used to reduce criminal behavior. *Risk* is identified as the level of harm the offender poses to himself and others. *Need* calls for the assessment of their criminogenic needs, and *Responsivity* is the way in which we intervene through cognitive-behavioral strategies. The RNR model identifies the *big four* as specific risk factors that are both dynamic (amenable to change) and criminogenic (directly related to recidivism outcomes). The *big four* criminogenic needs are: 1)
antisocial associates, 2) a history of antisocial behaviors, 3) antisocial cognition, and 4) antisocial personality patterns. Interventions that address the big four through education achieve the highest probability of behavioral change (Andrews et al., 2010). Process-oriented curricula and content strategies that address antisocial tendencies by enhancing social development builds the awareness needed to develop healthy relationships with prosocial groups and reduce the antisocial behaviors that leads to impulsivity, criminal thinking, and antisocial responses (Ross & Fabiano, 1985).

**Length of Program**

Longer, more intense programs have more success as it allows time to break down the chronic resistance associated with the criminal mentality (Brazao et al., 2013; Lipsey, 1995; Tolbert, 2012). In a study conducted by Lipsey (1995), effective programs that have the most impact should last over twenty-six weeks, meeting at least twice a week. Programs that offer over one hundred hours of contact provide enough time to help address dysfunctional cognitive thoughts and behaviors in order to correct them.

Lipsey (1995) found that longer courses provide the time required to address deeply entrenched maladaptive cognitive and behavioral patterns, as well as support students through the ambiguities and challenges that accompany change.

**Integrity**

Programs maintain a high level of integrity administratively when they have concrete goals, well-structured content, and clear boundaries (Brazao et al., 2013; Lipsey, 1995; Morgan & Flora, 2002). These policies and shared visions must be visible, transparent, and role-modeled to further enhance the quality of the learning environment.
Research also indicates that integrity is increased when students become involved in the creation and maintenance of program goals and vision.

Programs must also maintain data collection procedures to continually evaluate the validity and reliability of their strategies and outcomes and commit to modifications when required (Belcher, 2013; Brazao et al., 2013; Lipsey, 1995; Tolbert, 2012). Data should be collected and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure program and student success and to protect the integrity of the program.

Structured programs provide the expertise and integrity required to gain trust and establish the rapport necessary to motivate the post-convicted to seek out, participate in, and adopt a non-criminal lifestyle.

**Correctional Models of Academic Instruction**

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education Office supported the development of a correctional education reentry model to transition people from prison to education centers ranging from adult basic education to post-secondary education (Tolbert, 2012).

The reentry model is offered to those who are either incarcerated or under community supervision and is focused on strengthening and aligning education services to prepare students for the labor market. This model's strategy for student recruitment and retention offers cognitive-based skills, evidence-based curricula, peer mentoring and technology, employment services, and provides flexibility to accommodate working students. By establishing a strong program infrastructure supported through funding, strategic partnerships, staff training, data collection, and articulation agreements, correctional education becomes well integrated into the corrections system.
Correctional models provide effective strategies on how to work with the post-convicted and provide the framework to an evidence-based, best practices approach to post-secondary education for the post-convicted.

**Correctional Education Theory**

The transformative learning theory by Mezirow (1997) substantiates DiMambro’s (2007) argument that correctional educational can be transformational if the process is regenerative. Transformative learning is the process of effecting change within a student’s frame of reference. Adults perceive and react to the world based on their experiences, relationships, and environments. Their morality and values are legitimized though their interactions with others. Through transformative learning, students are challenged to critically assess their own assumptions from different perspectives and reflect on newly formed conclusions.

Mezirow identified four processes of learning: 1) elaborate an existing point of view, 2) establish new points of view, 3) transform our point of view, and 4) transformation of our ethnocentric habit of mind by becoming aware and critically reflective of our generalized bias in the way we view groups other than our own.

Students engage in social discourse to deliberate new understandings that challenge their previously established frames of references, thus reframing their perspectives on justice, civility, and respect and responsibility for helping each other. Environments where students collectively express their points of view while listening to the views of others facilitates the deeper meaning needed to transcend their perspectives into more global ones.
Correcting occurs when the post-convicted are taught the value and practice of examining their lives through the lens of higher education. They are more equipped to achieve a deeper sense of reflection into self once they are taught reflection as a practice (Fox, 1989; Frank et al., 2012; Swanson, 2009).

DiMambro (2007) looked at correctional education offered inside of prisons and found that the academic success of a student is more influential in reducing recidivism than participation in the program. Academic success experienced by students elicits the confidence and self-efficacy needed to practice law-abiding lifestyles. Focusing on the behaviors at the time of participation was the force that moved the post-convicted away from criminal habits and proved to be growth producing, as well as transformational.

Ryan and Deci’s (2000) theory of self-determination offers explanation into how self-motivation, social development, and personal well-being are influenced. Students have three needs: 1) the need for competence, 2) relatedness, and 3) autonomy. Human growth is fostered when these needs are met. Intrinsic motivation manifests as individuals are able to grasp meaning and synthesize that meaning with respect to their other goals and values, thus developing the ability to socially and personally develop. Motivation, defined by Ryan and Deci (2000), is the energy, direction, persistence, and equifinality of all activity and intention. Intrinsic motivation is illustrated when a person has placed a value and is committed in the act because it is considered significant to the person and or the community. They assert that maintaining intrinsic motivation will only be achieved in supportive environments where a sense of security and relatedness are fostered.

A sub theory to self-determination theory is the cognitive evaluation theory (CET) which provides the social and environmental framework of intrinsic motivation. CET
argues that social-contextual events such as positive feedback, communication, and rewards that convey competence during the action being taken can enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). CET also argues that feelings of competence will not enhance intrinsic motivation unless it is accompanied by a sense of autonomy and an internal locus of causality (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy and internalization allows individuals to actively transform and integrate values as their own.

Intrinsic motivation is elicited when people experience their own behaviors as self-determined and are able to experience a sense of competency and self-efficacy in the process. Contextual supports such as being given a sense of choice, having their feelings acknowledged, and being given opportunities for self-direction were found to enhance intrinsic motivation because they created a deeper sense of autonomy.

Research validates that transformational and process-based learning elevates the heart and mind away from the convict mentality and towards the compassion of a civically responsible person. Guiding the process of introspection, honoring autonomy, and providing opportunities to grow increases the student’s self-esteem, cognition, and abilities to self-regulate. This in turn fosters the social habilitation required for successful transition back into society (Frank et al., 2012; Swanson, 2009).

**The Benefit of Offering Correctional Education Outside of Prison**

Offering community-based post-secondary correctional education is beneficial economically as it costs less to educate the post-convicted student who is serving a community sentence (Borden et al., 2012; Nally et al., 2012). There are more academic resources in a community college than in a prison setting (Fabelo, 2002). Many prisons
lack the resources to provide computers, safe and secure Internet portals, and video instruction (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011).

Students are able to participate in a wider variety of course offerings, connect to the Internet, and learn from faculty who are specialized in their degree programs. Students may also meet the eligibility requirements for state and federal financial aid because they are no longer incarcerated (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011).

Not all prisons offer post-secondary education to the incarcerated. Only six percent of all men and women serving a correctional sentence have access to post-secondary degree programs and are not on educational pathways towards degree attainment (Castro et al., 2015).

The United States Department of Education suggests that only half of those who are incarcerated are able or eligible to participate in academic programs. Men and women in prison may be ineligible due to disciplinary infractions or waitlisted and considered less eligible based on their release date (Klein et al., 2004). As an example, men and women are more likely to qualify for education when they are closer to their release date. The growth in prison population has not resulted in the hiring of more correctional education staff and has therefore left many incarcerated individuals waiting for access to academic programs (Klein et al., 2004).

Students are also more likely to have fewer interruptions in a community setting versus a prison. Security protocols increase the level of difficulty in establishing an environment conducive to learning (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011). Involuntary transfers from one correctional facility to another interrupts coursework and can prevent inmates from completing their degree programs (Erisman & Contardo, 2002; Tolbert, 2012).
A study conducted by the Institute of Higher Education (2011), identified several challenges related to offering post-secondary correctional education in prison, to include limited classroom space and an undersupply of qualified instructors. Students were less likely to utilize instructional methods that required the use of the Internet. Students were also unable to bear the cost of a college education as incarcerated persons are ineligible for nearly all federal and state financial aid (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011).

There are also additional concerns when offering post-secondary education in prisons since the Department of Corrections can take away valuable input power from educators. As a result of the Department of Corrections facilitating the provision of postsecondary education, offerings become erratic, constricted, and nonexistent (Castro, et al., 2015). Offering education outside of prison walls preserves the role of education in helping students begin their personal transformations by fostering critical thought, self-reflection, and a stronger sense of self in the classroom (Nixon, 2015).

Community-based correctional education can be used as a preventative measure. Enrolling in CBPSCE during a probation sentence, a sentence that generally occurs prior to a prison sentence may prevent further offending. Correcting behavior in the community before criminal activity becomes prison-worthy avoids the destructive impact created by long-term prison sentences (Gehring, 2000). After spending a significant amount of time in prison, the previously incarcerated may suffer from societal stigmas, mental illnesses, and phobias of large crowds and open spaces associated with incarceration (Davis et al., 2013; Pager, 2003).

The post-convicted have lost years of being exposed to new advancements in technology, practicing soft skills, and maintaining technological competencies required to
compete for jobs upon release (Davis et al., 2013). The majority of prisons restrict internet access to inmates and do not receive funding to provide advanced technology (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011; Tolbert, 2012). Men and women leave prison unprepared to utilize the advanced technology required for even the most basic jobs. Community-based correctional education blended with technology will advance the learner with 21st century skills needed to compete for jobs (Tolbert, 2012). Attending programs offered within their communities increase their access to academic and career pathways that are aligned with state or local labor needs (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011).

Research indicates prison programming fails when students do not have a relationship to life outside of prison walls. Students are incapable of overcoming the deleterious effects of imprisonment when they are approaching potential employers with skills that are outdated and obsolete in the job market (Jengeleski, 1984). Geller, Garfinkel, and Western (2006) found the employment rates of formerly incarcerated men were six points less than men who were not incarcerated. Research recommends programming should offer post-secondary career and technical certifications so that returning citizens are able to qualify for job opportunities that will offer sufficient wages (Erisman & Contardo, 2002).

Community intervention is rehabilitative and corrective when efforts address the therapeutic, academic, and personal well-being of the post-convicted (Brazao et al., 2013; Klein et al., 2004). Studies validate that cognitive-behavioral intervention is more effective when offered within the community in an integrative way (Andrews, 1995; Brazao et al., 2013). The post-convicted are able to seek services for housing, medical services, and therapy for addictions while living in the community that will better equip
them with resources needed to sustain life on the outside. In a study conducted by Yamatani and Spjeldnes (2011), their findings supported that a well-integrated collaborative service system is effective, even with those who are at higher risk to reoffend due to the support and assistance they receive.

**Cost-benefit Analysis**

Post-secondary education is the most successful and cost-effective method of preventing crime (Davis et al., 2013; Karpowitz & Kenner, 1995; Nally et al., 2012). In a report titled, “Three State Recidivism Study of 1997,” conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, findings reported that every dollar spent on education returned more than two dollars to each taxpayer in reduced prison costs.

Davis et al. (2013), conducted a cost-benefit analysis on the direct costs of correctional education programming versus the cost of incarceration. Using a three-year re-incarceration rate for a hypothetical pool of 100 inmates, they estimated that the re-incarceration costs for those who did not receive correctional education would be between $2.94 and $3.25 million versus $2.07 and $2.28 million for students who did receive correctional education. This translates into a cost of correctional education ranging from $1,400 to $1,744 per inmate, suggesting that providing correctional education is cost-effective compared with the cost of re-incarceration. The RAND Corporation also conducted a cost-benefit analysis and reported every dollar invested in prison education programs yields a $4 to $5 reduction in incarceration costs during the first three post-release years” (Patrick, 2015; The Rand Corporation, 2015).
In the same study, Davis et al. (2013), conducted a meta-analytic analysis and found that participation in correctional education was associated with a 13 percentage-point reduction in the risk of re-incarceration three years after release from prison.

Making post-secondary correctional education available to men and women who have been previously incarcerated ends the intergenerational cycle of poverty and illiteracy (Borden et al., 2012). Students become financially independent and are less likely to rely on social programs like welfare. Men and women who receive an education build pathways in which their children will follow, thus breaking cycles of poverty.

There is a human cost to not providing rehabilitative services to those who are either incarcerated, or reentering into society. In a study conducted by Yamatani and Spjeldnes (2011), they found that the average cost of crime victimization across major types of offenses committed by inmates was $37,603 per inmate. When programs aim to improve the mental, personal, and social-well-being of the post-convicted while equipping them with venues to become contributing members of society, communities become the benefactors of these efforts as crime is reduced (Lawrence et al., 2002).

**Literature about the Professional Practice Setting**

Correctional education began in the 1790’s in the first American penitentiary, the Walnut Street Jail (DePuy, 1951). Although correctional education began in 1790, this research will begin in the 1960’s when post-secondary correctional education was offered outside of prison walls (Jengeleski, 1984).

Programs like the Upward Bound Oregon Prison Project in 1967 and Project Newgate in 1968 offered higher education as a means to offer assistance in socializing the previously incarcerated back into society (McCollum, 1975; Perlstein, 1975).
Post-secondary education was widely used in the 1960’s and the years thereafter until the 1995 Crime Bill passed a provision prohibiting inmates the ability to qualify for Pell Grants, leaving them without the economical means to complete degree programs (Gehring, 1997). Programs offering education at this time were quickly discontinued.

Since the 1995 provision, only six percent of all men and women serving a correctional sentence have access to post-secondary degree programs and are not on educational pathways towards degree attainment (Castro et al., 2015). An environmental scan conducted by this researcher resulted in less than 10 organizations nationwide that offer community-based post-secondary correctional education.

**Leadership Literature**

Correctional education programming faces mainstream opposition by taxpayers in regards to funding their programs when the education for law-abiding citizens is not funded (Gehring, 1997).

Despite research that indicates that post-secondary education is the most successful and cost-effective method of preventing crime and has had positive public-safety and economic impacts, tax payers continue to pay fifty-three billion dollars annually into a prison system that fails to correct the majority of those incarcerated (Karpowitz & Kenner, 1995). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014) reports that nearly two-thirds (67.8%) of released prisoners were arrested for a new crime within three years, and three-quarters (76.6%) were arrested within five years. More than a third (36.8%) of all prisoners who were arrested within five years of release were arrested within the first six months after release, with more than half (56.7%) arrested by the end of the first year.
A sixth (16.1%) of released prisoners were responsible for almost half (48.4%) of the nearly 1.2 million arrests that occurred in the five-year follow-up period.

We are not in need of more prison reform, we are in desperate need of prison reinvention by transformational leadership who understand the binding social and contextual factors that halt progress, yet are able to create an interdisciplinary approach to transforming the way in which we rehabilitate. Leadership required to create meaningful change must occur with government and system leaders, correctional education advocates, and the students who enroll in correctional education.

**Leadership of System Officials and Correctional Education Advocates**

Government and system officials must undergo what Haslam (2011) describes as a depersonalization process where a person shares a shared-stereotype in order to pursue collective concerns for the greater good. Practicing true rehabilitation will not take place until they begin investing into the betterment of all people for the common good. By working together to forge a shared vision and a common belief that powers through instead of powering over will illustrate a model of social influence and cohesion required for transformation (Haslam, 2011). Strong community collaboration and commitment of criminal justice agencies, human services agencies, academic institutions, and medical services to rehabilitation aid in the successful reintegration of returning citizens (Yamatani & Spjeldnes, 2011).

Leadership for correctional education advocates requires what Haslam (2011) calls self-categorization. Advocates must construct a social-identity through processes of influence and consensualization that elevate the input of lower level individuals into
higher order group products. Men and women who have criminal convictions may benefit
by gaining a collective sense of self, believing there is a collective to believe in.

   Forward-thinking leaders who embody the Jesuit value that everyone is a leader
will be able to build strong leaders who can handle backlash and disciplined enough to
maintain alignment to the ultimate purpose (Lowney, 2003). Referencing St. Ignatius,
Lowney (2003) states leadership must be change-ready and strategically adaptive,
innovative, and flexible. Change at this magnitude will require strategic in risk-taking and
willing to work collaboratively with agencies that have different goals.

**Leadership of the Post-convicted**

   Advocates cannot transform the handling of the post-convicted without the
investment and commitment of the post-convicted. Leadership at this level must elicit a
collective mobilization that defines size and direction of mobilization, group norms,
values, and identity (Haslam, 2011).

   We must teach the formal and informal leaders how to be skilled entrepreneurs of
identity to prove to the opposition that the post-convicted are invested in reform. Those
opposed to spending tax dollars on post-secondary correctional education must be
convinced this is a better system and these students must illustrate the change that is
needed for skeptics.

   Collaborative leadership at all three levels will increase the level of sustainability
of this measure. The skepticism, doubt, and opposition has and will continue to influence
the funding of academic resources provided to the post-convicted unless a unified stance
that is transparent, concrete, and credible is indefinitely taken.
Summary

Integration of post-secondary curricula in correctional education reduces criminal behavior amongst the post-convicted substantially as they pursue higher degrees (Davis et al., 2013; DiMambro, 2007; Hrabowski, & Robbi, 2002; McGuire, 1995; Nally et al., 2012; Patrick, 2015).

Ross and Fabiano’s (1985) cognitive model of delinquency prevention and offender rehabilitation offers a cognitive-behavioral approach to rehabilitation by implementing intervention strategies into correctional education focused on coping behaviors, moral development, self-regulation, and empathy. Bonta’s and Andrews’ (2010) risk-needs-responsivity model offers a cognitive-behavioral approach by focusing on the antisocial attitudes, beliefs, cognitions, and lifestyles that must be acknowledged in order to create the self-intervention. Andrews and Bonta (2003, 2006) created the personal, interpersonal, and community reinforcement (PIC-R) model theorizing a person’s self-control directly relates to their ability to monitor, evaluate, and deliver self-instructions to cope with temptations and self-deliver meaningful consequences.

Mezirow (1997) and his theory on transformative learning and DiMambro’s (2007) regenerative theory provide the theoretical and evidence-based framework to support best practices approach to community-based post-secondary correctional education. Ryan and Deci’s (2000) theory of self-determination offers explanation into how human growth is fostered when self-motivation, social development, and personal well-being are influenced by three needs: the need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy. The cognitive evaluation theory (CET) argues that social-contextual events
such as positive feedback, communication, and rewards that convey competence during the actions being taken can enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Each theory contributes to the functionality of correctional education by identifying the evidence-based practices that mitigate criminal propensities when embedded into CBPSCE programs. Chapter three will outline the methodology used to conduct a qualitative case study analysis to identify the specific program characteristics and practices that contribute to the reduction of criminal behavior.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to conduct a case study comparison of seven community-based post-secondary correctional education programs offered within the United States to identify specific program characteristics and practices that contributed to the reduction of criminal behavior. In this study, the participants answered open-ended questions covering curricula, environment, role of the faculty and school administrators, instructional strategies, student support and academic services, and supported transition. The purpose of this chapter is to provide information regarding the methodology of the study. What follows is an explanation of the research question, method rationale, sample, instrumentation, researcher’s role, data collection and data analysis plan, validation strategies, and ethical considerations.

Research Question

This qualitative case study analysis explored the types of community-based post-secondary correctional education (CBPSCE) programming used to transition justice-involved men and women back into society while reducing criminal behavior. The main question guiding this study was:

“What are the perceptions of, and policies employed by, the leaders of community-based correctional education programs?”

Method Rationale

A qualitative case study comparison was conducted to explore the program characteristics and practices within seven CBPSCE programs within the United States. Creswell (2013) defined case study comparison research as the study of multiple bounded
systems over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving interviews, audiovisuals, documents, program artifacts, and reports. A review of all documents and audiovisual recordings illustrating the history and chronological events of each program was conducted, including past studies conducted by social scientists, and statistical data gathered. Participants selected were school administrators, program directors, and faculty. These subject matter experts were interviewed regarding their insight and experience in post-secondary correctional education offered within the community.

There are three types of case studies: single instrumental case study, collective case study, and intrinsic case study (Creswell, 2013). The collective case study was the most appropriate methodology to use as it fostered exploration into all seven program sites nationwide to allow a detailed and holistic description to emerge. In this study, the data collected identified the specific program characteristics and operative factors that influence success within CBPSCE programs. Higher education reduces the likelihood of criminal behavior but has offered little explanation why (Davis, et al., 2013; Davis, et al., 2014; Meyer, et al., 2010). Qualitative case study comparison research identified the factors influential in contributing to the successful rehabilitation of students.

**Description of Sample**

Qualitative case study research requires the researcher to select cases that will show different perspectives of the process (Creswell, 2013). The selected population sample for this research was faculty and school administrators who offer community-based post-secondary correctional education.

Sixty correctional education programs nationwide were located through an internet search and then individually contacted to determine which programs met the very
specific criterion and context of the study. Creswell (2013), defined the context of the case as the setting in which the case presents itself. The environmental scan revealed less than 20 correctional programs located within the United States that offer community-based post-secondary education. All programs that met the research criterion were invited via email to participate to avoid selection bias. Faculty and school administrators were the subject matter experts qualified to participate in the study. CBPSCE students are a protected population and therefore remained excluded from the study.

Community-based correctional education programs are typically made up of a program director, faculty, and support staff. Since most of these programs are housed within community colleges, colleges, and universities, school administrators were also included into the population being studied. These individuals were important to this study as they represent the only professionals in the nation who have experience and insight into operating successful community-based correctional education within non-correctional environments.

After the initial review of 20 agencies, nine were identified as meeting the criterion. These were academic institutions who offered correctional education, but only to those who are in prison. They did not have a procedure in place to matriculate them into their schools upon release. Of the remaining nine institutions, two of these institutions mainly provide correctional education via correspondence education, but did qualify as they assisted in the transition from prison to their college upon release. They had a procedure in place to matriculate returning men and women into their college system. A decision was made to allow them into the study as they offered services to matriculate and retain the post-convicted into their programs. Two agencies did not
respond to three formal requests to participate in the study until after the study was conducted. Seven agencies participated in the interview process and a total of nine interviews were conducted. Eight interviews were recorded using an audio recorder which were then personally transcribed. One interviewee preferred to type their responses and email them. Seven interviews were conducted on the phone while one interview was conducted in person and the other in conducted over email. Of the nine interviewees, one was a chair of the program, one was a director, one was a staff assistant, and six were directors who also served as faculty. Six participants were located within the western region of the United States while three participants were located within the mid-western regions of the United States.

**Instrumentation**

Interviews were the primary instruments used for data collection. The researcher collected data herself through examining documents and interviewing participants through open-ended questions (Creswell, 2013). Each participant was contacted via email requesting their voluntary and confidential participation in the research (Appendix A).

All participants were emailed the interview questions prior to the one-hour interview to allow for reflection. Participants were asked to answer a series of open-ended questions covering curricula, environment, role of the faculty and school administrators, instructional strategies, student support and academic services, and supported transition (Appendix B).

Each interview was digitally recorded using a recording instrument, personally transcribed, and returned to the participant for verification of accuracy and certification of authenticity. All transcriptions are maintained in files identified by an alphabet letter.
As an example, Participant A, Participant B, and so on. Follow-up interviews were conducted with two participants to gather additional information and three of the participants have added my email address to their email system, which automatically sends newsletters, minutes to their meetings, announcements, upcoming workshops, trainings, and graduations.

**Review of Artifacts**

Each participating program was asked to provide the following artifacts if these artifacts were not located online:

- mission and vision statement
- description of the program, including program goals
- course offerings and descriptions
- all published research and artifacts on the program
- program statistics (if available)

The researcher explored real-life cases herself, through detailed and in-depth data collection using multiple sources of data, to include audiovisuals, reports, and program documents over time (Creswell, 2013). A detailed description of the phenomenon being researched required a review of the history and chronological events of each program, to include documents such as brochures, class materials (syllabi), and past studies conducted by social scientists. Archival records significant to review are the annual reports containing information on enrollment and completion rates and statistical data.

**Audiovisuals**

All program webinars, video interviews and digital recordings that were published were reviewed and utilized for research purposes when deemed relevant. Use of multiple
community-based correctional education

sources of data ensured an in-depth understanding of the strategic and specific pedagogies and paradigms that contribute to correctional education success.

**The Researcher’s Role**

The role of the researcher is to seek understanding of the world in which they live and to develop subjective meanings of their experiences while relying on the participant’s views of the situation (Creswell, 2013). The topic of my dissertation in practice was the result of working with those who have committed criminal offenses who were given community sentences as a sanction for their criminal behavior. Working as a probation officer enabled me to work closely with people who committed violent crimes. I was able to identify a connection between high-risk behaviors and education and found that the majority of my clients had less than a high school education, learning disabilities and/or cognitive-processing disorders and read between the third and sixth grade level.

Upon identifying how the lack of education contributed to their criminal past, I began imposing education as a requirement of their sentence. I found those who were eligible for higher education were more successful in completing probation sentences. They obtained certifications and degrees that helped them attain jobs, gain confidence and the hope that they could support themselves legitimately. They redefined their futures as education opened up a new world of what could be and empowered them to continue to academically develop their minds.

In all of the rehabilitative practices that I used as a probation officer in 13 years with hundreds of clients, education was one of the most successful and sustainable means in rehabilitating offenders of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.
Now that I have worked as a post-secondary correctional instructor, I have been able to identify the reason why education is successful in rehabilitating offenders. It is not the actual education itself, but rather the personal introspection into one self, the building of self-efficacy and self-esteem that affords such transformation. They may enter as men and women with criminal convictions, but they leave as students with a restored hope in their futures, who have become empowered to believe they were meant to be more.

My role as a researcher was to step back from my own experiences and perspectives and take an objective and unbiased look into the program practices and characteristics that elicit this personal and academic transformation. Using carefully designed methodology, I was able to listen to the experiences and wisdom of each participant, record their information and then review their words for emerging themes. My role was to listen for the answers with integrity and objectivity to answer my research question that guided this project.

The challenging part of this role was active listening. Prior to this experience, I characterized my ability to listen as above average. As I transcribed the first two interviews I learned that my way of listening was distracting as I offered responses. Upon reflection, I became cognizant that my personal way of communicating must immediately be modified to ensure that the focus was only on the participant and that my ability to listen was not distracting.

Reflection became more important during the interview and coding process. Conducting qualitative research yields higher-level responses that are complex when assessing meaning. I found myself easily able to code most responses and found that a few of the participants offered such profound responses that called for deeper reflection.
into the meanings of their responses. Note taking by means of Mind Mapping fostered the process of interpretation for me in order to authentically identify the emerging themes.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The main source of data collection came from confidential and recorded interviews. Qualitative researchers develop a complex picture of the situation in order to identify the complex interactions of factors involved in the situation in order to sketch the larger picture that emerges (Creswell, 2013). Participants were interviewed to gain an understanding on what program practices and characteristics make community-based correctional education successful. Participants were also able to offer their own explanations as to why programs have failed in the past and shared personal experiences in their professional careers that provided the insight as to what will make a program successful or unsuccessful.

Each participant participated in a one-hour interview either by phone or in person. Six of the seven programs were located throughout the United States. The only participant local to this researcher was interviewed in person. All interviews were scheduled at the participant’s convenience. Although this researcher made attempts to keep the interviews at one-hour, many, if not all participants were eager to speak longer than one hour. I allowed participants to speak as long as they wanted but ensured I honored their time and would not keep them longer than one hour if they chose to end the interview on-time. The interviews ranged from one hour to 90 minutes.

Each participant was made aware of the aim and purpose of the study. Due to the delimitations of the study, the participants were informed during our initial contact that I could not interview any person who was under Judicial supervision. All participants
informed the interviews would be recorded, confidential, transcribed, and returned to
them for permission to use in research. Programs were eager to share their experiences
and were willing to participate in additional conversations via email and on the phone.

The researcher took notes during each interview and reviewed all program
materials upon completion of the interview. Adjustments were made to the list of
questions after the second interview was conducted and transcribed.

Establishing rapport was easier than previously anticipated as this community is
very small and often operate independently of each other. The idea of a researcher
inquiring into their purpose-driven mission and creating a venue for all agencies to
eventually connect was extremely important to them. The data collection process
occurred over a three-month period.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis began after the second interview was transcribed and remained an
active practice until after the completion of all nine interviews. Upon completion of the
transcribed interview, words or short phases were written on the right side of the page of
the transcribed interview. Saldana (2009) defines a code as a word or short phrase that
captures the essence of language.

Phase one of coding began after each interview was personally transcribed and
consisted of encoding words and short phrases that emerged from the interview as
important. Encoding is the process of determining the appropriate code and labeling it.
Upon completion of coding an interview, all program documents, artifacts, and visual
artifacts were then coded. The words and short phrases that emerged were evaluated and
then handwritten and coded into a Mind Map. A Mind Map was created for each
program, totaling nine Mind Maps. From this process, 43 codes emerged from all nine interviews and were then recorded into an Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix C).

The second phase of coding began after all of the interviews were transcribed. A process of decoding was used as it consisted of reflection of the data to decipher the core meanings (Saldana, 2009). All 43 codes were organized under the same categories used in the interview questions (curricula, environment, instructional strategies, role of faculty and administrators, student support and academic services, and supported transition) to begin the process of emerging themes.

Phase three coding occurred after two follow up interviews were completed and reflection into how well the codes aligned under the same categories taken from the interview questions. The category labeled as “environment,” emerged into the theme “culture” once a deeper sense of reflection was reached. “Supported transition,” emerged as the theme, “reentry services” to embody the comprehensiveness of the practice. The categories, curricula and instructional strategies were combined into one theme.

Reflection and deliberation identified 14 subthemes, and five sub sub-themes. Creswell (2013) defines this process as codifying. All coding was manually completed and recorded using an Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix C).

**Validation**

Upon completion of transcription of each interview, the transcript was emailed to the participant. Each participant was asked to review the transcript for authenticity. Each were informed that they could make changes using a different color font, delete previously made statements, or keep the transcript in its original format. One transcript was revised to include additional information. All transcripts were returned via email.
Measures were taken to ensure credibility, validity, and reliability. Structural corroboration was utilized to ensure credibility. Creswell (2013) defines structural corroboration as the use of multiple types of data to support or contradict the interpretation. Various types of data were compiled to substantiate the totality of findings as accurate and depictive of the participant’s story. Reoccurring statements, practices, and protocols emerged as the themes and subthemes once it was determined that each occurred by the majority of the participants. By listening to the participants with the goal of understanding, this researcher was able to identify critical elements, balance perspectives, and write plausible interpretations. The goal was not to validate their practices, but to capture and report the essence and authenticity of their experiences.

Creswell (2013) describes validation as a process rather than a standardized approach. Validation was treated as a process through research practices of self-reflection, transparency, and calls for clarification. Self-reflection and synthesis was practiced as a means to interpret the meaning of the research. Many participants made statements that required higher level interpretation as their perspectives and meaning were complex and rich with experience and empathy. Reflection facilitated the synthesis required for the researcher to feel confident in the accuracy of the meanings projected. The researcher utilized calls for clarification. After deliberation and reflection, participants conducted several follow-up interviews to clarify meaning and seek validation of this researcher’s interpretations of the data. Reliability is also a process ensured through transparency, ethics, and consistency. The researcher handled the line of questioning in the exact same manner to ensure consistent responses. Interviews were
recorded with a digital recorder and personally transcribed. All transcriptions were returned to participants for review of authenticity and permission to use in research.

**Ethical Considerations**

The ethical considerations required to complete this dissertation in practice were to ensure anyone who was currently serving a judicial sentence was not allowed to participate in the interviews. All information was stored in a locked location to ensure confidentiality. Participants were notified that their participation was confidential and that they could terminate their participation at any time. Their recorded and transcribed interviews were not used without their written consent. All participants were notified that their contributions would only be used for dissertation research only.

Bias was controlled by utilizing methods that eliminate selection bias and in the transparent methodology design. Exploring and strategizing bracketing though reflection and journaling was practiced in order to mitigate the potential transmission of bias, personal assumptions, and connection to the topic. By sorting out the qualities that belong to the researcher’s experience, rigor is ensured. Incorporating interviews with mentors who are less emotionally invested also facilitated a cognitive and emotional balance to maintain objectivity.

**Summary**

The purpose of this research was to conduct a case study comparison of community-based post-secondary correctional education programs offered within the United States to identify specific characteristics and program practices that contribute to the reduction of criminal behavior to create an evidence-based model. Only nine programs currently exist and were invited to participate in an interview in order to collect
the data required for analysis. Nine participants were interviewed and an extensive
analysis was conducted on all program materials, websites, and audiovisual material.

Manual coding evolved into five themes 14 subthemes, and five sub sub-themes
that will answer the research question of what makes CBPSCE programs successful, as
well as provide the construct to complete an evidence-based model.

Chapter four will present the description and explanation of the data analysis
procedures that ensured reliability and validity. The results from data collected and the
emerged themes from conducting interviews will be analyzed, synthesized, and
presented. A rationale and solution in the form of an evidence-based model for CBPSCE
programming will be presented based on the results of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND THE EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTION

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study comparison of CBPSCE programs within the United States was to identify specific program characteristics and practices that may contribute to the reduction of criminal behavior.

The aim of this study is to design best practices guidelines to community-based post-secondary correctional education programming. The following question guided this qualitative study:

“What are the perceptions of, and policies employed by, the leaders of community-based correctional education programs?”

This chapter provides a review of the methodology, an account of data analysis procedures used by the researcher, and a detailed description of the study’s findings about what program practices and characteristics of community-based post-secondary correctional education successfully reduce criminal behavior.

Review of Methodology

A qualitative case study comparison was conducted to explore the program characteristics and practices within seven CBPSCE programs within the United States. Sixty correctional education programs nationwide were located through an internet search and then individually contacted in order to determine which programs met the very specific criterion and context of the study. The environmental scan initially revealed less than 20 correctional programs located within the United States that offer post-secondary education in a community setting. All programs that met research criterion were invited via email to participate in the research study to avoid selection bias. Of the 20 agencies,
11 agencies either did not fit the criteria after speaking with them or did not respond to three separate invitations to participate in the research. Those who did not meet the criterion were academic institutions who offered correctional education, but only to those who are in prison. They did not have a procedure in place to matriculate them into their schools upon release. Of the nine institutions left, two of these institutions mainly provided correctional education via correspondence education, but did qualify as they assist in the transition from prison to their campus upon release. They had a procedure in place to matriculate returning men and women into their college system. Two agencies did not respond to three formal requests made over a two-month period to participate until after the completion of the study.

Seven agencies participated in the interview process and a total of nine interviews were conducted. Eight interviews were recorded using an audio recorder which were then personally transcribed. One interviewee preferred to type their responses and email them. Seven interviews were conducted on the phone while one interview was conducted in person and the other in conducted over email.

Participants selected were school administrators, program directors, and faculty. These subject matter experts were interviewed regarding their insight and experience in post-secondary correctional education offered within the community. An extensive analysis was conducted on all program materials, websites, documentaries, and audiovisual material.

Manual coding of the transcribed interviews and program artifacts evolved into five themes (culture, role of faculty and school administrators, instructional strategies and curricula, student support and academic services, and reentry services) and 14 subthemes
and five sub sub-themes that answer the research question of what makes community-based post-secondary correctional education programs successful. The data collection and analysis process occurred over a period of three months.

**Data Demographics**

Of the nine interviews conducted, two were program chairs who support the directors of their programs. Six were directors of their programs who also facilitated their own courses. One person was a program assistant. Four programs are offered in a university while three programs are located in a community college. Six participants were male and three participants were female.

**Results**

Each participant answered a series of open-ended questions that pertained to his or her practices and the characteristics of their community-based correctional education program. Participants provided their perspectives on how these programs are successful in reducing the barriers that lead to criminal behavior. A comprehensive review of all program and school artifacts and audiovisuals, including course syllabi and course materials were also reviewed.

Emerging from this data were the five following themes: (a) culture, (b) the role of faculty and school administrators, (c) instructional strategies and curricula, (d) student support and academic services, and (e) reentry services.

**Culture**

Community-based post-secondary correctional education is unique in that it offers specialized curriculum and services to men and women who are either serving a community supervision sentence or to those who are returning from prison. Questions
asked to participants referred to environment, and as the interviews progressed, it became apparent that these programs are more of a culture than an environment. Merriam-Webster defines culture as “a way of life shared by people in a place or time, the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices.” Participant A, described his program, stating, “We are not a program. We focus on a process that is evidence-based, best practices.” Participant E stated:

   This is a program of study but we are a community. This community is a touchstone for them. So no matter where they go in the world, if they run into problems, they can come back and touch base here.

The majority of participants referenced their programs as, home, community, family. Participant C noted, “I call it our family because anybody that graduates this three-week class becomes our family here.” These programs provide a place of healing the soul and human spirit while setting a safe and welcoming environment to facilitate transformation, reinvention, and restore hope.

   There were three subthemes that emerged from culture: (a) holistic, (b) inclusivity, and (c) family reintegration.

   **Holistic.** Defined by Cambridge Dictionaries (2016), holistic means “dealing with or treating the whole of something or someone and not just a part.” Within the subtheme of holistic, five sub subthemes emerged: (a) structure of support, (b) open-door, (c) leadership and empowerment, (d) language, and (e) transformation of heart and mind.

   Every participant spoke of treating the entire being, and not just his or her criminal backgrounds and behaviors. All participants discussed the comprehensive continuum of student needs that are interconnected and related to one another. In other
words, a student cannot achieve self-actualization if their basic needs of love, acceptance, and safety are not met. Students cannot effectively learn if they are homeless, hungry, or physically and mentally unwell. Participant A stated, “we provide workshops that teach physical wellness.” Paraphrasing participant B, his program repairs the harm caused by prison abuse. Participant F elaborated on how his program includes trauma-informed pedagogy and educates students on how the brain works and how trauma affects brain functioning. He discussed how learning could not take place until the brain heals through deep reflective practices, Socratic Seminars, and project-based learning. Referencing trauma, participant E1 noted, “a lot of them (students), especially our female students, are dealing with rape, incest issues, and they come to us extremely broken and they need assistance.” Participant F added, “I work very, very gentle with people because it’s like throwing a pebble into a pond and the ripples start.” All but two programs are connected to resources for food, shelter, and clothing and offer on-going holistic support.

Structure of support. Regarding their structure of support, participant E stated students are in cohorts so they adjust together and bond as a group throughout the courses. Students become not only responsible for each other, but to each other. Participant B added, “students create a cooperative environment because of what people have,” explaining that many students share their books to afford school. Participant C spoke in regards to the transition from prison to his program, stating:

So the transitions in place for them and you just walk them through it and get them hooked up with the school. You show them how to fill out a FAFSA, you introduce them to Admissions, where there’s an ex-offender [who is in] the Admissions Department. So I introduce them to him and now they are hooked up
with him because he’s empathetic toward the population. Participant F stated, “Students have a need to be altruistic. Students have a need to cover each other’s back [to] be connected. Having belonging is really important.” In a document produced on Participant F’s program, their model design incorporates “support integrated into the classroom by using a ‘one-to-many model’ where peers are actively engaged in helping one another overcome challenges and stay on track.”

In regards to hiring the previously convicted, participant C and G, stated that hiring the previously incarcerated adds to the culture of support, stating, “they have walked in their shoes so they know more about how they (students) are going to react and what their needs are.” Participant C added, “They really have a strong bond with the parolees as they come out [of prison]. They’ve been where they were and they know the difficulties that they are going through right now.” Further adding to his statement, participant C reflected:

I introduce myself as an ex-offender and the room goes quiet and they start asking questions that maybe they wouldn’t have asked somebody else that really doesn’t have any idea of what it’s like to be there. My job is to go down and show them, ‘here I am with a Department of Corrections badge on and I’m an ex-offender. I’m the person you are going to see when you come to the front door and they come and they see me and they know they can be successful.’

**Open door policy.** Every participant described their program or community as having an *open door*. Participant A stated, “we have an open door. We have many alum, many alumni who still come and visit.” Participant C stated, “Students are welcome back anytime. I tell them we are here until [they] don’t need us anymore.” Participant G spoke
in regard to students who recidivate and return to the program a second time. He stated, “We didn’t give up on you. It means you made another mistake.” Many participants spoke of enrolling students as many times as they needed to become successful.

These programs have created a foundation for students, which will remain a constant for them. Participant E stated, “We are a cornerstone for them. We will always be here when they need us.” Describing the incarcerative experience from firsthand knowledge, participant C stated, “It’s loss of freedom. It’s loss of choice. It’s loss of family. It’s hardship on the home-end of it. You know, it’s hard for your kids to see you while you are in prison.” Many or most students have lost family, friends, homes, jobs, and have returned to society hopeless, angry, and broken-spirited. It would be easy for them to return to a criminal lifestyle that leads back to prison, but these programs immediately connect with them by welcoming them with a continuum of support to help them transition back into society.

The culture is illustrated in the descriptions in which all participants provided. All participants described their programs as warm, welcoming, home, where students and staff are family, community, loved, and accepted. Participant E, explained:

Having this community here, that helps students with challenges in real life. And they will help students make phone calls, whether it’s for drug addiction or housing’ or, ‘I don’t have food or I don’t have money for my meds.’ I mean, those basic life issues, somebody in that community has been through it before. Participant E1 explained that she has spent many holidays in the office with her students because they had nowhere to go.
**Leadership and empowerment.** Once students feel safe and welcomed, participants begin to empower students by building self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-sufficiency. Participant C stated, “Students learn that their points of view are important.” The program design that all participants spoke of elicits a degree of belief in themselves to gain a sense of self-worth and pride.

Participant E1 offered success stories of students who found their self-worth and were able to build their self-esteem and self-efficacy. She added:

> We have so many students that are Phi Theta Kappa, making straight ‘A’s. This last year two of our student went to [high ranked colleges]. It has been three years in a row that our students gave the address at graduation.

Phi Theta Kappa is an Honor’s Society program for students. Participants also spoke of their learning environment as one that reframes failure. Participant A stated his process is to reframe failure as a way to reflect, learn from the process, and move on. He stated his students learn that failure is a part of the process and that we are here to pick them up. Participant E1 stated, “students learn that failure is part of the learning environment. They can fail here and it doesn’t mean they are going back to prison.” Students learn that failure is an opportunity to reflect and learn from their mistakes with support. Participant A explained:

> When someone fails, we gotta be there when they pick themselves up. Ok, now lessons learned. Let go of it and let’s move forward. And too many times we allow this adult population to learn on their own, fall on their own, and there’s no one there when they are prepared to get up except themselves and then it’s very easy to go back to the old way of thinking and the old way of behaving.
Aside from reframing failure, many of these participants also encourage students to reframe their prison experience. Participant C stated:

I would teach them to talk about prison as an asset rather than a barrier. Because if your life has changed because of your incarceration and you’ve turned it around in some way, then incarceration becomes an asset to you because it’s taken you away from the activities that got you in trouble.

**Language.** This researcher found two strategies used in this particular area. These participants are conscientious of the language used and are “forward thinkers.” All participants make their students reference themselves as students. Participant E1 explained:

We tell them, ‘don’t refer to yourself as an ex-con or a felon. You drop that at the door. From this point on you are a college student.’ And so getting them to change how they see themselves is important.

Participant B spoke of how men and women are “treated like garbage in prison.” He stated it is very important that instructors build a student’s self-confidence by seeing them differently stating, “No, you are not garbage. You are a college student.” Participant E explained how they do not treat students different as a means to prepare them for the classrooms of students who are not in correctional education. She stated, “They go into those other classes and they are just another student and that really helps them [move] past that label.” Every program changes the way these students see themselves with language. Only one program used words such as, “felons, criminals, ex-cons,” the rest used words like, “returning citizens, the post-convicted, justice-involved.” It is clear the
strategy is to begin the re-identification process of themselves and to our communities that they are people, students… worthy of a name and not a label.

When interviewed, participants made statements such as, “move forward, moving forward, and we cannot dwell on the past.” When participants referenced statements that they made to their students, the message was centered around present and future tense, so that students focus on their futures and not remain weighted down by their past mistakes. Participant A stated he tells his students, “Let go of it and let’s move forward.” Getting to students to think in the present and look toward their future appears to be an important strategy with eliciting intrinsic change.

**Transformation of heart and mind.** Participants elicit transformation of the heart and mind by teaching self-love and empathy, inspiring selfless-contribution, and encouraging deep introspection. Parts of the mission statement of many of these programs are to guide their students to reinvent themselves and develop a positive self-image. Participant D, a program director and Chair, stated, “our [institution] has a transformative mission to be part of helping students transform their lives.” Participant F stated, “Success is a student [whose] heart is open and they are willing to explore and instead of defending their positions, to be open and curious about why things are different in the way they look at the world.”

All participants spoke of their culture as teaching service for others. Many participants stated they inspire selfless contribution by being purpose-driven and helping them to find their personal values. Participant D’s website stated, “We create agents of change and renew the human spirit to transform.” In fact, the majority of program
website’s have mission statements that used words like, “social justice, transformation, and service to others. Participant E reflected:

One of the greatest things about our program, [is that] they really get these students to think about others and get involved in community activities and helping others. Getting the focus off themselves and onto ‘how can I help. How can I give back?’ And that culture is very powerful and it builds their self-esteem when they can realize they can help someone else.

Participant F stated:

I provide an affective, non-cognitive curricula to shift the student’s mindset and to transform them from the inside out with a community of other students that are moving together to learn the behaviors and habits to change their lives and the trajectory of their families.

Participant A spoke of the need for the community to see these students giving back so they begin to accept them back into society. It is also a way in which students can rebuild trust within the community. Many participants spoke of the social stigmas their students carry with them and therefore understand the need to involve them in activities where they are serving others and helping communities to overcome these stigmas and build trust. Participant A spoke of the goal as motivating students to “sponsor events,” and not just participate in them.

To achieve transformation of the heart and mind, students learn self-love, empathy, service to others, as well as through deep introspection into self. Participant C asks students to “look inward.” Participant E stated, “The program of study is three classes that really help them in their own self-awareness and self-assessment of figuring
out what your own personal values are and who you are.” Participant F explained, “[There is] a lot of reflection. You need mindfulness to develop the prefrontal lobe. You give them the tools to discover who they are.”

Students feel a restored sense of hope. Students begin these programs weighted in failure, judged, and afraid of how others will treat them. These programs offer a safe haven of acceptance and love that welcomes and supports the desire to change. Students and their families begin to see the change and begin to feel hope towards their futures. Students become excited of reinventing their selves to become productive and responsible citizens. As they acculturate, they begin to see themselves not as felons, but as students. This restored hope becomes the fuel that ignites the change process.

Within the subtheme of holistic, the aforementioned five sub subthemes emerged: (a) structure of support, (b) open-door, (c) leadership and empowerment, (d) language, and (e) transformation of heart and mind.

Inclusivity. Inclusivity emerged as the second subtheme of culture. Inclusivity defined by Google means, “an intention or policy of including people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.” Participant A stated, “They’ve got to be given the same opportunities as everybody else in society. We work with all risk levels. I teach exclusively sex offenders.” He further added:

We are a public institution education, they have a right to this education and so we need to be very understanding of what that means. These individuals are just like any other student at our [institution]. Period.

Participant B stated, “You don’t take an ‘us or them’ mentality. You actually treat them as a normal student. I never cared why someone was incarcerated. That’s not our job.”
Participant C stated, “There are no restrictions here at [our university] whatsoever, for anybody that wants to go through the university. Our foundation is built on social justice.” Participant D spoke of the measures they take to ensure students feel included on their campus, stating:

We created a newsletter specifically for students that has a section so that they meet staff members and we let them know what is happening around campus. We do seasonal photos of the campus. Our students can now be members of an Honor Society. We send them certificates so [they] can graduate with Honors.”

When speaking of students who may have to finish their coursework in prison she stated, “we honor them as a graduate even if they are still incarcerated.” She indicated their transcripts do not identify the courses as “correspondence courses” because, “the faculty here who are designing these courses are still using the same student learning outcomes and authentic assessments that they are using in their regular courses.” Participant D added, “We treat them like any other student. There is that expectation that they have to do the work too. And so I think that’s a benefit to helping these students understand what the expectations are going to be in the world when they get out.”

**Family-oriented.** Participants interviewed spoke of the importance that post-secondary correctional education has on the families of students. In speaking to the self-confidence that this program gives students, participant B added, “It not only impacts them, but it also impacts generations. Their kid can say, ‘my dad is a college graduate. My dad is in college’.” Participant A added:

They remain connected to services with people who are very committed to family reintegration who do a lot with the moms and dads while they are incarcerated to
Participants answered why they have chosen to take a comprehensive and holistic approach. Participant A responded:

Because we know that the evidence-based research tells us that the more education a person gains; the more money they are going to make. The more access they’ll have to other opportunities for housing. If a person out of this cohort is working, is educated, has appropriate, suitable housing and they’re clean and sober for three years, two things are going to happen. One, they are not going to go back to prison. And two, they are not going to relapse.

The culture of these programs provide a warm and welcoming environment in which students are met with a comprehensive continuum of physical, emotional, academic and psychological support to care for their well-being. The amalgam creates academic rehabilitation in a learning environment conducive for intrinsic change.

**Role of Faculty and School Administrators**

The second theme that emerged within community-based post-secondary correctional education is the role in which faculty and school administrators play. The following subthemes emerged: (a) supporters of the access mission, (b) love-driven and transformational leadership, and (c) advocates.

**Access Mission.** During the interviews, it became clear that all school leaders are incredibly supportive of ensuring pathways to education, especially for those who are marginalized and/or impoverished. All participants spoke of having an *Access Mission*, a
way to provide academic rehabilitative services to those who are or were previously incarcerated. Participant A reflected:

I believe one of the reasons that we’ve had so much success, [is that] students have demonstrated so much success in their transition and reentry. From the chancellor, to the president, to the vice-president, to the dean, to the director of our division, the faculty, our state, [everyone] is engaged in this population. We are all committed to second chance opportunities.

In speaking towards state support, participant A spoke of state initiatives that were made at the legislative level that will help transition men and women from prison stating, “we’ve had two very important policy improvements. One, Bend the Box. The second thing, minimum wage is going to be fifteen dollars an hour.” The Bend the Box initiative advocates the removal of questions on job applications that ask if the applicant has been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony. Participant B stated:

The institutional support I get for this program is huge. The support, I mean, it is unreal. If you don’t have that support in an institution, your program is not going to work. You have to have dedication from the institution. And the school has to take a lot of what was initially pushed in their heads about people who have been incarcerated and throw that away and be totally open to stuff. You have [to have] institutional support and have massive dedication by the people that are involved in it. And if you don’t, those programs will fail or won’t be as successful.

The website of Participant’s B school states:

As members of the [university] community, we value opportunity and access for all. [Our university] emphasized its historic commitment to under-served
populations, including underrepresented minorities, first-generation, and low-income students.

When speaking in regards to the lack of funding towards these programs, participant B stated, “that’s something that we struggle with because we want everyone to have access to education.” In regards to the creation of his program, participant C stated their program:

Was the dream of an instructor at [their university]. [Our university] took a liking to it and within the first year, they had developed a very good relationship with the Department of Corrections and it evolved eventually into us offering a Bachelors of General Studies in nine prisons.

Their programming was discontinued when the Pell grant was retracted but was able to keep their community-based program. Participant C noted:

Not many have the kind of relationship and it’s something that has developed over the years with the retraction of the Pell grant. [The] community college has been able to continue to offer programs because of the choices their Board of Directors have made where the school was actually affording them the classes.

Participant C’s program website states, “The school’s mission was clear; to make higher education available to all students who qualify academically, regardless of their socio-economic status, racial or ethnic origin, age or gender.”

Participant D explained that her university has kept full degree print-programs despite the advances of on-line education, explaining:
We kept this going just because we know there is an access mission part of our mission. It’s access to education for students and we feel very strongly that it’s the right thing to do to provide access to incarcerated students and we have a lot of success stories. Participant E explained the President of the college’s stance:

[He] saw the community need and so that’s why [our program] was established. He made it a President’s Initiative. That is the key to success, is having the full support of upper administration that is not going away. We support this, we welcome this and having that example to follow opens people’s minds a little bit. And once you help educate people to have this positive program of people who are trying to change their lives, that’s a good thing. [It’s] the example set by the President and just the whole culture that we’ve created for the program.

Love-driven and transformational leadership. Many participants spoke of soft skills when questioned in what characteristics they look for in themselves and their faculty. Participant A noted:

Faculty must be “inclined to know how to teach adults to learn to learn for the first times in their lives in many cases. And that means that teacher has to have a tremendous amount of empathy and patience. But we have to have faculty that are committed, totally committed to a person’s second chance opportunity.

Participant B stated, “you don’t take an ‘us or them’ mentality. You have to be really open and if you’re not open, then the program will fail. Participant C added:

You have to be empathetic for the population [and] understanding of the things that they are going through. You have to be able to not only teach in a group, but
also one-on-one and take every body’s concern, personal concerns into
consideration. They have to be able to confide in you. You develop trust.” He
spoke of the importance of students being able to know they can confide in
faculty and know that it will remain confidential.

Participant D added:

I think the biggest thing that is for our instructors is that they have to understand
and care about the situation the students are working with. They have to have the
desire. [They] have to appreciate the access mission.

Participant D stated, “sometimes somebody will destroy their text books and stuff and
we’ll send them out again [free of charge]. If [the prison] moves them to another prison
and they don’t let them take their belongings [we send the books again].” Understanding
a student’s circumstances and making the decision to send new books free of charge
illustrates a high commitment to helping students succeed. She also discussed how she
would send students paper and pens.

Participant E described an effective instructor as having:

Infinite patience, an open-mind, an understanding of this population and what
some of the challenges are that they face. [They must have an] understanding of
the psychological process that they are going through to reintegrate out of a prison
community into a completely different community and to help recognize what
those struggles are and understand that they are not just regular students. They are
going to need a little more care. They need a little more one-on-one attention and
early intervention, which we do. I would also say for an effective instructor that
they have to hold students accountable but still be caring.
Participant E1 stated that faculty should be, “passionate about working with this population. It’s gotta be somebody who really believes that they are capable of changing.” Participant F added:

Teachers have to be able to teach affectively and non-cognitively. I work very, very gently with people. You facilitate the learning, you don’t lecture. You facilitate the discovery within the student. [You focus on] the internal transformation of the student as the goal. When you’re focused on helping the student, you help them realize they are on a journey. You give them the tools to discover who they are. You have to create the conditions in the environment where we are all agreeing on how to do things. If you’re going to have a student change their sense of self, you have to have a culture for that.

Participant G stated:

An effective instructor, “[follows] up with them” when they are going through personal matters. He added, “You have to have a desire to teach this type of population and have to continuously want to improve yourself and implement your own evaluation system. Someone knowledgeable, dedicated, and somebody you could rely on.

A theme in their leadership styles emerged as each participant spoke of their personal mission. They appear driven by seeing others transform. It matters to them to help others who may not be able to help themselves. Participant C stated, “I’ve just been blessed with opportunities to watch people evolve and when these guys catch on to that feeling, you can’t stop them.” In this particular interview, I heard him speak from his heart as he made statements like, “I want them to be accepted back into society, and “the
main thing is to stop generational incarceration because I’ve seen families incarcerated at the same time.” He added:

When people talk to me they always tell me how they can see how dedicated I am to this population, but I’ve been doing it for a quarter of a century and the tail-end of it is so fun to see when they come back smiling and they have a job and they introduce their wives to me or they bring their kids to my office and you just know that it worked. It’s a great feeling.

Participant D stated:

I’ve been doing distance education my entire 30-year career. It has been based on an access mission. The people we reach here are people who could never come to our campus for whatever their life circumstance. I didn’t have access to the programs that I wanted. I kind of understand that because I dealt with it myself.

Describing her priority as maintaining the access mission, she stated:

You need to find a way to reach them. We are a much more connected society now but not everybody falls into the typical four-year path and even struggles sometimes with the community college path. And this is just a small pocket, our correctional education program is just a small pocket of students who are starving and dying for an education and it’s the one means they can take it.

Providing education to all populations was important to her, despite the extra effort it takes to provide print-based education via the United States Postal Service.

Advocates. Many of the leadership practices that participants take is one of advocacy for the program and services in which they offer. Participant B explained:

We do have this massive, great institutional support, but that doesn’t come
naturally. You have to build it. What would the program look like if you didn’t have that fighter in there? If you didn’t have that fight. If we didn’t have myself and a couple of my colleagues, what would it look like?

He spoke of a time when a local city wrote an article in regards to his program and he received backlash. He spoke of his response stating:

I’m an educator. I did my job. You know, I don’t care what they did. And if you wanna go into it really, ‘do you want him to come out less educated? Abused by the system? Or do you want him to come out someone who feels a little bit empowered and knows something and can use those marketable skills or whatever that might be?

When speaking to faculty having been previously incarcerated themselves, participant C stated, “I think if the person has been where they participants are coming from, these guys know their teacher is one of them.”

Participant G stated:

You would think that after 30 years or 40 years of getting tough on crime and putting these people away and not doing anything for them and letting them rot, they could come out a changed people. Oh no no no, you gave them no tools to fit into society. And by the way, if you want to take this a little be further back, we don’t give a big part of our population the tools to survive so they take things into their own hands to try to survive and it usually means they commit a crime.

Throughout this interview, and the interview conducted by participant B, both spoke of the social inequities within the American society that is responsible for the disproportional racial sentencing within our criminal justice system. They spoke of how
political and cultural practices have put into place discriminatory practices that reinforce mass incarceration. Their advocacy for post-secondary education transcends education.

From these interviews, this researcher noticed one distinction in leadership styles that emerged. Female and male directors and faculty spoke differently in their leadership goals. All female participants spoke to the emotional well-being of their students, while male participants spoke to making their students productive and providers. Every female participant included “setting boundaries,” with students and spoke of needing to be confrontational at times. Of the male participants, spoke neither of setting personal boundaries with students nor of being confrontational.

Dedicated faculty and school leaders believe in the access mission and second chance opportunities. They lead with their hearts and are driven by the transformation of others. They advocate for the marginalized, the men and women who need them most.

**Instructional Strategies and Curricula**

The third major theme that emerged was Instructional Strategies and Curricula. Instructional strategies are the specific practices used to engage students academically. Curricula are the specific materials used to that are specific to correctional education.

All programs offered a range of academic and vocational curricula ranging from a general education diploma, life skills and reentry skills, career and technical education, certificates and licenses, to a Master’s degree. The length of programs range from three weeks to more than eight years. Each participant spoke of the strategies used to elicit motivation and change in their students while others spoke of the curricula used. From this, the following subthemes emerged: (a) cognitive and cognitive-behavioral, (b) non-cognitive and affective, and, (c) andragogical.
**Cognitive and cognitive-behavioral.** According to the National Alliance on Mental Health (2014), cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on exploring relationships among a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviors to work actively with a person to uncover unhealthy patterns of thoughts and how they may be causing self-destructive behaviors and beliefs. Many of the participants indicated their curriculum is cognitive-behavioral. Participant A identified their program is strength-based stating:

[Our] curriculum is a cognitive behavior treatment (CBT) modality [built] on CBT research embedded in a curriculum. How you think is how you behave and so we want to reverse that behavior. It is a process and it’s all cognitive-driven. And we got to be patient, sometimes it takes one to three years and sometimes it takes longer. But we can provide the foundation and the support to follow that individual through their process, rewarding positive outcomes and reinforcing positive outcomes.

Participant D stated she has high expectations of her staff to provide detailed and timely feedback, construct authentic assessments, and provide study guides. She explained:

To make this successful and make this a good learning experience, they have to give feedback the students need. And sometimes it’s hard feedback for the students to accept. But doing that is an important piece.

Speaking to the cognitive component of her program, participant D stated:

I think that what the faculty strive to do is help them see things more critical [and elicit] critical thinking. Print-based curriculum improves their writing skills because they have to do this all in written form. They come out with better communication skills and a better thought process.
Speaking to the cognitive-behavioral components of her program, participant D stated, “one-on-one communication with a faculty member can guide them (students) into more appropriate behaviors. You can still look at attitudes and other behaviors that show up in written form.” In regards to rigor, participant stated, “we set expectations that they have to do the work and they have to earn the grade. That expectation that they are students also means they are a student in every way, shape and form.”

Participant F explained:

> I do a lot of pro-positive behavior work. It’s a positive prosocial model; a psychological model that is strength-based. My program addresses low readiness and life skills with an emphasis in mindfulness and we channel behavior towards education. My program addresses criminogenic needs.

He identified the criminogenic needs as: orientation and manipulation, emotional factors, pure relationships and inadequacies, employment and education, family dynamics and history, abuse, neglect, and trauma.

All of the participants stated they confront old belief systems, elicit possibility thinking and hold students accountable for their learning. All but two programs offered correctional-specific curricula and homework. Most programs offer a curricula that guides the student to locate the source of their actions and provide some form on intervention-type of curricula, to include goal-setting and time management.

**Non-cognitive and affective.** According to the Research Triangle Institute (2010), non-cognitive attributes are those academically and occupationally relevant skills and traits that are not specifically intellectual or analytical in nature. They include a range of personality and motivational habits and attitudes that facilitate functioning well in
school. Non-cognitive traits, skills, and characteristics include perseverance, motivation, self-control, and other aspects of conscientiousness.

Participant E1 described her program, stating, “it’s a 21-week program with each module being seven weeks.” Upon review of her syllabi and course materials, her program offers three courses that builds academic and elicits transformation of the heart, and addresses familial dysfunction. The first class explores the book, A Man’s Search for Meaning, by Viktor Frankl. This book, alongside with a workbook assists students in finding their purpose and mission in life. It helps students develop empathy, purpose, and love as a guiding behavior.

The second course has students examine their experiences in the home and their relationships with family, including the role they played within the family. In this class, these students address abuse, shame, abandonment, neglect, and victimization and learn how the roots of dysfunction shape the brain to think differently. They trace their own lives back to the experiences that negatively shaped their lives and through facilitation, they begin to forgive as part of the healing process. Aside from learning their roots of dysfunction, students undergo a process of self-discovery and reinvention. Speaking to the goals of the program, participant E1 stated, “The goal is to get them passionate enough about wanting to continue their education and to see their connection with other people.” Participant F stated, “I wanted [to create a curriculum that would] light a fire under young people that didn’t do well in high school, that are disconnected from society, that are jaded that society treats them as throw-a ways.” He went on to create a curriculum that is non-cognitive and affect-type of curriculum model that has a social justice research component. He stated:
The curriculum that I use comes from the high-tech industry and we’ve known over the years that compassion, listening, leadership skills are the ones that really work. You can’t tell people what to do, they are thinking people, they are assets. We also do a lot of curriculum around mindfulness, which is important for the development of the prefrontal lobe.

**Andragogical.** Andragogical learning insists adult students actively participate and take ownership in the learning process to create an environment characterized by mutual trust, respect, and shared responsibility (Bergevin, 1967; Knowles, 1971; Lindemann, 1926). Andragogy differs from pedagogy as it focuses on establishing a cooperative learning environment where students control their own learning. Pedagogy involved a learning environment where the instructor controls the transfer of knowledge through their own instruction and methods (Monts, 2000). Participant A explained that his program offers a number of community activities to reinforce on-going social development and on-going education development. Participant A spoke of students who graduated the program and then returned to student-teach. Participant B spoke of increasing group interaction skills by working together. Participant C’s program website honors experiential learning, stating, “The knowledge that you acquired outside the classroom is extremely valuable. [Our] university accepts up to 30 semester hours of prior learning credit from various sources.” Participant D spoke of her curricula being academic and project-based. She also stated, “We do experiential learning too.” She also added, “When [students] have these interests, we can try and get them the courses or they do it through special projects with faculty members here that can develop a degree that is more meaningful for them.” Participant C stated, “The very first class they are learning
about themselves, but they are also learning, at the same time, communication skills.”

Participant E1 stated, “We’ve done field trips. We try outside activities where it’s something maybe that they’ve never experienced before just to give them the social interaction.” Participant E1 also explained that she develops learners by having her students mentor new students, teach curriculum, and present as guest speakers.

Participant F stated:

Students start learning intrinsically inside themselves and develop that capacity, which is the prefrontal lobe executive function capacity. We’ve developed curriculum to get the students to go inside and to support each other to develop those pro-social behaviors and pro-social mindset. I provide the affective-non-cognitive curricula to shift the student’s mindset and to transform them from the inside out with a community of others students that are moving together to learn the behaviors and habits to change their lives and the trajectory of their families. We also help to develop academic self-efficacy and college identity, which are critical psychological constructs to make successful college students.

In regards to how learning is facilitated, participant F explained:

You get into a deep inquiry of people. [People get in touch with some very deep things. I’ve had people that were on parole, right out of prison, tears coming down their face because they realize it wasn’t their fault as to why they didn’t do well in school. They can look outwardly and see the kinds of things that influence and impacted their lives. It’s part of the brainstorming and the sharing out what they are learning and what they are discovering, and so they are hearing each other’s story and getting in touch with what their lives were like. And so people start to
explore their lives and think about it.

In regards to his andragogical approach, he explained:

You facilitate learning, you don’t lecture. You facilitate the discovery within the students and the way to do it is by asking them question, which is the Socratic Dialogue method. Take them through the process of discovery and you add academics at the same time. Academics, the discovery, and the transformation, it’s all together.

All participants spoke of engaging students immediately to retain them and keep them from returning to their old lifestyles. One participant stated they have courses over breaks and holidays to maintain routine for their students. Participant E stated, “It is on-going, it’s over the break. They don’t take a break. So they still have that continuity and security and that rhythm.”

Instructional strategies and curricula include rigor, relevance, and relationships. Using strategies and content, participants hold students to academic and behavioral expectations and spoke of making adult education relevant to the student’s interests and experiences. Some participants tailor programs to make the learning experience more meaningful. All participants discussed the importance of building relationships by connecting with their students, as well as connecting students to their peers.

**Student Support and Academic Services**

The research produced a fourth theme related to student support and academic services. Student support and academic services are the additional support services provided within the program and through the school. Within this theme emerged the following subthemes: (1) mentoring and academic services, and (2) advising.
Mentoring and academic services. Each program offers various degrees, licenses, and certificates. Seven of seven schools offer Vocational Certificates and Associates degree. Five of seven schools offer Vocational Licenses. Four of seven schools offer a Bachelor’s degree. Two of seven schools offer a Master’s Degree. All schools indicated they are willing to accept credits from other accredited schools and established partnerships with community colleges, colleges, and universities to widen the net of available courses to students. Two of the seven schools provide entire degree programs through print-based curricula called correspondence study.

Many of the participants spoke of assisting student in developing academic portfolios and/or professional portfolios for potential employers. All participants stated they have flexible schedules to accommodate students who work and have families. Financial assistance for students varied between schools. Many offer free life skills and academic preparation workshops. Only one-program offers free tuition if students meet certain conditions. Six of seven-degree programs are not free. Students must pay to attend. A few programs offer financial aid. The program website for participant B’s states the following, “Congress removed federal financial educational aid for incarcerated individuals when the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement act passed in 1994. Therefore, no federal aid in the form of Pell Grants or guaranteed loans is available to students in state for federal correctional facilities.” Only one school offered scholarships to this population.

All participants spoke of their commitment to providing services for students with learning disabilities in accordance to the Learning Disabilities Act. Participant A stated:
We have a full-time special needs coordinator that if we observe or we identify a student that may need special attention because of their learning challenges or developmental challenges, then we must make that referral immediately because not only is it the law, it’s the right thing to do.

Participant B and D’s programs are strictly academic programs in universities that offer correspondence courses. Both participants stated they are able to tailor degrees to student interests. Participant D stated, “Our program is the Bachelors of Specialized Study and so that’s kind of a program where they work with an advisor and design a program and get it approved.” In response to offering academic services, participant D stated they provide resume writing services. She also discussed how students receive extensions to assist them when they are dealing with medical issues or life events. Due to her class being a correspondence course, she stated, “we send out post cards and notifications to encourage getting that first lesson in to be graded.” Participant E added:

They have [our] office environment, a place where they can go study, hang out, get help from their peers and staff. But they also have the regular college support: the Learning Commons where they can get a tutor on specific subject matter or time management or how to study for a test; all of those study skills that may have not been learned. The Learning Commons is where you can get more help that also helps with that transition into regular classes. There is a support structure within the whole college community.

Participant E1 stated they offer college preparatory courses and connects student to remedial modules if needed. Participant E stated, “The other thing that we encourage
them to use is the Writing Center that’s here at the college for any papers that they are going to do.”

All participants spoke of having an open-door policy and providing one-on-one services and guidance with personal issues to students who need individual attention. All participants spoke of walking students through the enrollment process. Many participants place students in cohorts to build peer-to-peer support and relationships.

**Advising.** Participant B stated he spends time going into prisons to hold workshops to educate those who are incarcerated. His program’s website states that each student is assigned an advisor who is available year round at a toll free number. He stated, “we go through basic stuff like, ‘what is a college’.” Participant B stated:

Advising is huge with these students. Because I not only advise students, we advise facilities, parents, families, and friends. So many of these individuals do not have social capital where they’ve been socialized to get all this information growing up. And so a lot of times I spend a lot of time just going back to, ‘what’s a college credit? What does it take for a degree?’ giving real expectations for people, that is a huge thing.

Participant D stated, “we do all of the advising. The advisors really do a lot of detailed letter writing and say:

Here are all of your steps and here’s what we recommend. Advisors work very closely with them to make sure they understand that [they] are a college student and this is college-level work. Advisors touch base regularly even if there [isn’t] something that needs to be done.
Reentry Services

The final theme to emerge was reentry services. Reentry services are the services offered to students to mitigate the barriers they face when reentering society; barriers such as housing, food, clothing, medical services, and transportation. The following subthemes emerged under reentry services: (a) transitional Solutions, (b) workforce development, and (C) community partnerships.

Transitional solutions. Participant A explained that his program and learning centers throughout the state are a direct result of the strong partnership between his college and the Department of Corrections. “We joined a partnership, a contractual partnership with DOC in 2002, and then now, 15-16 years later, we have six learning centers functioning, six days a week, and servicing the adult population.” Participant A spoke of the state support in which his program is able to benefit, stating:

[students] are eligible for welfare benefits and food stamps, [they] have a process where [their] voting rights can be reinstated. We are one of the few states that the Obama Administration asked to be a part of the Affordable Care Act rollout to make sure that our population could sign up for the Affordable Care Act. Bend the Box [was passed] and minimum wage is going to 15 dollars an hour.

Participant A also spoke of community activities in which he has his students sponsor through their non-profit to begin reestablishing trust within the community, stating, “community members start seeing these men and women and start asking questions.”

Participant A spoke of their seamless transition in assisting men and women returning from prison, providing their free transitional workshop, and then transitioning them into the college system. He stated:
We put into place the ‘Earn Up’ incentive package where if you complete your GED, Life Skills and Steps to Freedom [programs], then you’ve earned up and you can select from 20 different college options [and] your tuition will be paid for. So there’s about six different funding streams in our state that our college can use to pay for that Earn Up incentive to continue their higher education.

Participant C stated:

What makes community-based post-secondary correctional education programs so successful is the relationship that they have with the colleges that are starting the process during incarceration. [We] offer any adult that wants to come back to college the chance to obtain a Bachelor’s degree in three years or less. Our program works very closely with a community college in the vocational areas. We can put you in a culinary training program, that’s 13 weeks long and absolutely free and get them a job then at the end of those thirteen weeks in the culinary field. And if they don’t find them work within three or four weeks, they hire them part-time until they find a job.

Participant C also spoke of helping students begin to establish credit, stating:

We have partnered with a bank that is offering our guys a free checking account no matter what their offense. We are setting up direct deposit for the guys that have full-time employment and if they are able to save $500 dollars in that account, the game plan is to offer them a Master card then that has a $500 dollar limit on it. And what they do is they charge a few things on it a month and pay it off on-time and in six months they have established credit for themselves.
On participant C’s program website, there is a section for additional resources for students that assist them in obtaining their identification and social security card. The site states, “If you need assistance with the $20 fee, call our program and we can refer you to various organization that supply vouchers for those who qualify.”

**Workforce development.** Participant A stated, “We prepare these adults for reemployment and offer job readiness training.” The approach is to work from their established skill set as a foundation to improve. Participant A stated their job readiness program included, “an eight element portfolio that employers require.” He explained this as a step process to help students navigate to reestablish themselves within the community by getting a picture ID, requesting a social security card, how to be prepared to return to work and retained by employers. He also spoke of this process including advisement on how to be transparent, stating,

> Our adults [did] not know how important it was to provide full disclosure and to be transparent. [That] again is a teaching process. Many of our men and women, because of the lives that they lived and how they lived, to disclose or be transparent was not the way you survived in that other world.

Participant A explained how many men and women who are returning from prison have awaiting garnishments and extensive criminal history that need disclosure to potential employers. Participant A has created workshops that prepare individuals to be open and transparent about their situations with employers so employers are making informed decisions and not placed into a situation where employers are terminating their positions.

Participant A spoke of the vocational services offered to their students, stating, “either in the short-term certification process like landscape horticulture or welding or
warehouse logistics, there’s a one-year certification in a professional technical areas of high demand or a two-year degree.” Speaking to job assistance, participant A stated:

We have developed a secured database of 430 second chance employers that work exclusively with our students with criminal histories and they hire men and women at all risk levels that have gone through our process and completed that process successfully. So when a person completes the process in the classroom, those soft skills, those very necessary soft skills, and they completed and demonstrated competency with their portfolio, then that’s when we begin that prep go to work process to reemployment.

Participant C spoke of his program, stating:

We have a three week Personal and Career Development class and the first two weeks is really centered on workforce development and resume writing and computer training. We have a Consumer Literacy Workshop and a Legal workshop incorporated where they learn about fraud, what their Parole rights are, and things like that. Then the third week we actually have employers come in and help us do mock interviews. Some of them could be hiring at that time, but more importantly, they are actually sitting down with an employer and interviewing for some them for the first time. So the program really teaches them how to prepare themselves mentally for the societal barriers that out there directed at [them] and how to better prepare themselves to talk about their criminal background. We teach them to have this knowledge of how they are being looked at by an employer who has never known an ex-offender before. So they have to go in and say, ‘my incarceration was an asset because it has truly changed my life and
Participant E1 stated, “the third class called, Careers and Directions, deals with the direction that they may want to go. What kinds of careers they might want to look at that best fits their personalities and what they want to do with the rest of their lives.” Participant E1 added that her program offers work-study positions to employ students.

Community partnerships. Community partnerships are identified as businesses and academic partnerships offered by community entities. Participant A spoke of community partnerships as being a key element, stating:

We have a very unique partnership that cuts across all the key systems in our county and city that provides essential transition solutions that lend to successful reentry: from housing providers to mental health providers to treatment providers, folks who provide food, to people who are very committed to family reintegration. The Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts do a lot of work with the moms and dads while they are incarcerated to make sure their kids stay connected and then when they get out, those community programs are in place to reconnect families and keep them connected.

Participant A also spoke of faith-based communities being involved and meeting once a month to aid in student transitions. Participant B discussed community partnerships in relation to the entities who allow him to offer education. He stated:

One thing we do and we continue to do and will always do is we go into prisons and we do college workshops with people. The Department of Corrections is totally open on the education front, helping people get education.
He spoke of a Director of Education from the Department of Corrections made common core number that aligned with the community college system. He stated, “He tried to make it to where the colleges would accept the vocational work that they do in prison.” He further explained that these students could then transfer their college credits earned in prison to his university as elective credits towards their Extended Studies Program.

Participant B stated his state needs to provide wrap-around services. He questioned:

Why don’t you do some wrap-around services? Why don’t you take that stupid check off a job application? That’s going to hugely impact recidivism. They try to get a job and it’s almost virtually impossible if we don’t address the structural causes of why things that impact people negatively impact people.

Participant C spoke of their ability to run their program, stating, “we couldn’t have done it without the partnership of the Department of Corrections and their understanding of the importance of academic rehabilitation.” Participant C also spoke of the importance of community partnerships and spoke of story regarding one of his students. He said:

This guy came out with a business plan on how to be a trainer and a yoga instructor and studied I while he was in. We sent him to an organization that offered free workshops on how to own your own business and today he has running business that’s insured and bonded.

Participant C spoke of a seamless transition from prison education to community-based post-secondary education by explaining that he works very closely with the community college who is offering accredited credit-based and vocational education in prison so that his university accepts the credits, “so that the transition is seamless.” He stated, “the credits that I did earn while incarcerated are now transferable to our university and I can
get my degree in three years. So that transitions in place for them.” He explained the extensive partnership with a local community college, stating:

We work very closely with a [community college] in the vocational areas that offer training in the prisons currently. They work in seventeen prisons down state and they offer vocational areas such as food service and culinary arts, welding, warehousing, horticulture, landscaping, and auto mechanics. And in the vocational end of it, say you’re incarcerated and you are in food service and you are taking food manager certification and/or food handler certification. We can take you then when you parole and put you in a culinary training program that is 13 weeks long, five days a week, absolutely free, and get them a job at the end of those 13 weeks in the culinary field. And the only way that it works is by the community college that’s offering the classes in prison working very closely with the curriculums that are offered once they are released. It’s where [my] university has worked with [the] community college and made sure that the classes are accredited and being offered in prison would be accepted at our university. I think that’s what makes it successful, so that transition is seamless.

Participant C also explained the importance of linkage agreements, stating:

One of the things that we’ve learned that really works well when you are developing linkage agreements with other non-profits is to really take a look at what their contracts demand of them. Split responsibilities and I think that helps funding entities come up with more money because they see these partnerships that are forming. And so I start to partner with this program that helps the homeless and we get their ex-offenders coming to our program while I send ours
to their program that need housing. Having them work together forms a strong
bond. I think that is one of the key aspects of being successful is spreading the
wealth and forming partnerships with all working under this umbrella as a team
rather than as a competition.

All participants spoke of having a relationship with the Department of Corrections, and
the Parole, and/or Probation department. All relationships range from having little to no
partnerships to relationships where there is a strong partnership. Participant A stated:

It’s so important for us, with our partners, our Federal, State, and County partners
to embed our learning centers in those correctional environments. Not only to
support them in kind of their natural comfort zone, but focusing on the education.
But also the professionals in that environment to impress upon them and even
though you are a community corrections officer for probation officer or a case
manager, how can our prison and our students who are you clients impress upon
you maybe the necessity for improving your practice.

Participant B and D both use proctors from the Department of Corrections in order to
facilitate school exams. The website from Participant B states, “The majority of our print-
based courses require a proctor. A proctor and be anyone employed by the Department of
Corrections.” Participant D elaborated on this relationship stating she and her staff work
hard to develop relationships with the educational officers within the Department of
Corrections so they have proctors.

Reentry services support the fragile and rocky transition back into society.
Students are met with a continuum of support to mitigate the obstacles and barriers that
returning citizen face upon release. These services embedded into education complete the final steps of rehabilitation.

The qualitative case study comparison conducted on seven CBPSCE programs nationwide yielded five themes: a) culture, b) role of faculty and school administrators, c) instructional strategies and curricula, d) student support and academic services, and e) reentry services. Each theme influences the successful matriculation, retention, and transition back into society for those who have left prison and are entering into post-secondary programs, which in turn may reduce criminal behavior. From these findings, guidelines were created to assist CBPSCE programming in operating successful programs that reduce the barriers that contribute to criminal behavior.

**Analysis and Synthesis of Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative case study comparison of CBPSCE programs within the United States was to identify specific program characteristics and practices that contribute to the reduction of criminal behavior.

The aim of this study was to design best practices guidelines to community-based post-secondary correctional education programming. An evidence-based approach designed to reduce criminal behavior to ensure consistency amongst currently existing programs and elicit nationwide replication.

Research indicates that skill development and degree attainment is significant to reducing the barriers men and women with previous convictions face by elevating their abilities and opportunities to succeed. But what remained unknown was how these programs were able to reach high levels of success in reducing criminal behavior and transforming students into individuals who see themselves as doers for the greater good.
Degree and skill attainment alone are not the only contributors to reducing sustained criminal behavior. The findings of this research examined the practices of seven programs who reported having success in reducing sustained criminal behavior, as well as, in finding ways to transform the heart and mind.

The findings of this research identified the five following program characteristics and practices that contributed to the reduction of criminal behavior and transformed students through a re-identification process.

First, programs that create a holistic and inclusive learning communities that are family-oriented retain the most marginalized and fragile population and have a higher likelihood in achieving academic rehabilitation. These findings are supported in the literature review through Ryan and Deci’s (2000) theory of self-determination. They assert that maintaining intrinsic motivation will only be achieved in supportive environments where a sense of security and relatedness is fostered.

Secondly, independent of the literature review, this research found the role of faculty and school administrators determined the success of a program when they supported the access mission. Only one program used the term, *access mission*, but it was clear that all seven programs believed in creating pathways to education for all populations. Each program found a way to provide access to education to one of the most ostracized and marginalized populations.

Also independent of the literature review, this research found that CBPSCE leaders are transformational and love-driven. Faculty are seen as advocates by their students and are more successful in establishing the trust and relationship required to elicit intrinsic transformation and growth within correctional students.
Third, the most effective CBPSCE programs offer academic curricula that address the cognitive-behavioral aspects of a student through critical thinking embedded with non-cognitive and affective instructional strategies. This finding is supported by the literature review. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is the most successful form of treatment used to reduce reoffending because it targets the antisocial attitudes, behaviors, cognition, and lifestyle patterns associated with criminal behavior (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Lipsey, 1995; Vaske et al., 2011).

The inclusion of non-cognitive and affective instructional strategies emerged independent from the literature review as an essential component to correctional education. Personality, motivational habits, attitudes, and characteristics include perseverance, motivation, self-control, and other aspects of conscientiousness. Correctional education that balances cognitive-behavioral with non-cognitive and affective instructional strategies maximizes the capacity of the brain to encode the information being taught.

The literature review supported the findings in regards to andragogical facilitation. Faculty facilitate learning through an andragogical approach to elicit a desire to learn. Andragogical style learning involves the student in every phase of the learning process. Students who actively participate in service learning and take ownership in the learning process create an environment characterized by mutual trust, respect, and shared responsibility (Bergevin, 1967; Knowles, 1971; Lindemann, 1926).

Fourth, the literature review supported academic programs that offer student support and academic services focused on mentoring and advising students assist in the matriculation process and increase student retention. Structuring correctional education to
have the academic support required to succeed is significant to the rehabilitative process. Students who progressed academically and completed their studies successfully due to having support and resources such as tutors, peer mentors, and study groups had lower rates of reoffending than those who only participated and did not finish and or have high academic success (DiMambro, 2007). Peer mentoring has been proven effective in student success and academic progress (Bloom, Redcross, Zweig, & Azurdia, 2007; Tolbert, 2012).

Lastly, independently of the literature review, comprehensive reentry services in the form of transitional services and workforce development sustained through strategic community partnerships are more successful in reducing the barriers that contribute to criminal behavior. Community-based correctional education blended with technology that will advance the learner with 21st century skills needed to compete for jobs (Tolbert, 2012). Attending programs offered within their communities increases their access to collegiate programs that have articulation agreements that create academic and career pathways aligned with state or local labor needs (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011).

The literature review supports reentry services as vital to the process, however this research found that these services do not begin when men and women leave prison, they begin when they are in prison. The strongest programs amongst the seven interviewed began the reentry and matriculation process while men and women were incarcerated. A continuum of comprehensive services streamlined the process from prison into the community and increased as men and women began to face barriers. This seamless process contributed to a more structured program with higher retention rates.
Independent of the literature review was also a significant finding to the transformation process. The strategic and intentional use of language is the conduit to the transformation process. All CBPSCE programs are intentional in their use of language which ignites the re-identification process. Men and women who are called felons, ex-cons, offenders, etc., carry with them stigmas that make reentry difficult. When they buy into these labels they continue to mentally incarcerate themselves from opportunities to see themselves as something different. When leaders and mentors reinforce their status as students, mothers, fathers... human beings, they begin to see themselves accordingly and mentally remove their chains. Language fosters the acceptance to see themselves as something more than a felon or ex-con. Once they begin to re-identify themselves, there is little desire to return to a life they once knew.

Reducing criminal behavior is not the main goal in community-based post-secondary correctional education. Most program directors and staff admitted they do not track recidivism rates and choose to view success differently. The findings from this research indicated that success is not determined by a student’s decision to continue crime, success is found when students develop the life and academic skills needed to change their lives to break cycles of addiction and crime. Offering correctional education in the community is more about removing the barriers that men and women face upon return that tends to tempt them back into criminal thinking and behaving. This researcher found that when students are exposed to and influenced by a prosocial environment and have access and opportunities to education and resources, they are in a position to make non-criminogenic decisions to better their lives.
Summary

School administrators, program directors, and faculty from seven agencies nationwide participated as subject matter experts and shared their insight and experience in post-secondary correctional education offered within the community. An extensive case study analysis was conducted on all program materials, websites, and audiovisual material from each of their programs over a three-month period. From manual coding of the transcribed interviews and program artifacts emerged five themes answering the question, “What are the perceptions of, and policies employed by, the leaders of community-based correctional education programs?”

The success of CBPSCE programming manifests through the strategic and seamless transition from prison to college by supporters of the access mission. The programs who sustained the most success with students forged community partnerships to create a prison to college pipeline to intentionally reduce the barriers men and women face upon reentry. Students begin their academic journey by taking college courses while incarcerated through articulation agreements between the prison and school. Academic prudence becomes habit through routine, structure, and consistency- traits that are reinforced in their daily routines while in prison.

The relationship between the prison and the college is fundamental to the success of the strategic transition. The most successful programs have staff that are allowed into prisons to provide informative college workshops, college-preparatory courses, assisted enrollment, and correspondence courses. Faculty are also allowed to create an academic environment conducive to learning that is supported by prison staff.
This prison to college pipeline begins the re-identification process from *inmate* to *student* while providing the support structure and services needed by students to acculturate into post-secondary education. As these men and women begin their reentry process, academic officers (in prison) work with prison liaisons (in schools) to establish a seamless transition from prison to college to maintain the routine and structure that became habit while imprisoned. This transition is supported by embedding wrap-around services though community partnerships to ensure students are met with a comprehensive continuum of services. The most successful programs provide comprehensive reentry support services for students and their families.

Students are met with resources for drug/alcohol dependence, homelessness, food, clothing, transportation, parenting, and medical services to reduce the barriers that contribute towards one’s return back to prison. In addition to these programs establishing an academic pathway to a new future, students receive opportunities for workforce development to gain employability skills. The most successful programs maintained an employee database and networked with employers in order to have jobs available to those reentering society. Students are able to immediately address societal barriers by having this supported transition by their school.

These academic institutions serve as their cornerstone, keeping them focused in maintaining newly acquired beliefs, values, and behaviors. Participants state that men and women who leave prison have a higher success rate in not returning to prison if they immediately connect with and report to their program on a daily basis.

While this process is detrimental to the transition process back into society, the most successful programs immediately begin a strategic re-identification process by
having men and women identify with a new school identity. Students become acquainted with a new circle of peers who inspire prosocial behaviors and positive mentorship. Students begin to re-identify their selves into a new community that rewards positive and law abiding behaviors. This re-identification process is the key to success. Students see themselves as members of a community who can contribute to the betterment of others. They find their place and purpose in this world. Moreover, once they have established their new identity they have little reason to return to their previous behaviors.

Taking a holistic approach to heal the student creates a setting conducive for transformation of the heart and mind. School leaders who provide a balance of accountability and empathy are able to establish the trust needed for students to become vulnerable to change. Once trust is established, students can thrive in an environment where they are able to process through their failures to reinvent their selves. Students are able to process through their maladaptive behaviors and thought processes and reconstruct a prosocial way of thinking and behaving.

Academic rehabilitation was a term used by many participants, as this is the final stage of rehabilitation and the beginning steps towards successful reintegration. Through a transformative mission, students develop self-esteem by experiencing a greater sense of accomplishment as they begin to identify as college students and overcome the social stigmas and labels they once carried. Students begin to feel a restored sense of hope in their futures as they experience acceptance into a prosocial community and success in their transition efforts. Programs accomplish success when a student reinvents a new sense of identity and identifies with a new prosocial lifestyle that changes their life path.
The aim of this study was to design best practices guidelines for CBPSCE programming. In the last chapter, these five themes provide the foundations for a series of best practices for community-based post-secondary correctional education programs.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Education, job training, and employment are amongst the needs of the previously incarcerated while they reintegrate back into society and are commonly the same factors that influence post-conviction criminal activities (Visher & Lattimore, 2007). Research has yet to uncover why education is successful in reducing criminal behavior. Further inquiry was needed to identify the program characteristics within the curricula and environment of community-based post-secondary education (CBPSCE) that reduce criminal behavior (DiMambro, 2007; Nally et al., 2012; Tolbert, 2012).

The purpose and aim of this research was to conduct a case study comparison of seven CBPSCE offered within the United States to identify specific program characteristics and practices that contribute to the reduction of criminal behavior to design best practices guidelines to CBPSCE programming.

This chapter will present the best practices guidelines for community-based post-secondary correctional education that emerged from this research. Guidelines are organized into three tiers ranging from critical to the process of academic rehabilitation to preferred practices for comprehensive academic rehabilitation. Also presented in this chapter are the roles and responsibilities of the key figures that are significant to CBPSCE programming. Concluding the chapter will be recommendations for future research into community-based post-secondary correctional education.

The analysis conducted in this dissertation identified the five following program characteristics and practices that contributed to the reduction of criminal behavior and transformed students through a re-identification process.
First, CBPSCE programs create a holistic, inclusive and relationship-based learning community. Secondly, the role of faculty and school administrators support the access mission and are transformational and love-driven leaders. Third, academic curricula are embedded with cognitive-behavioral, non-cognitive, and affective instructional strategies. Faculty facilitate learning through an andragogical approach. Fourth, academic programs offer mentoring and advising specific to the needs of correctional students. Lastly, programs offer comprehensive reentry services in the form of transitional services and workforce development sustained through strategic community partnerships. A continuum of comprehensive services streamlined the process from prison into the community and increased as men and women began to face barriers.

CBPSCE programs are intentional in their use of language because it ignites the re-identification process. Reducing criminal behavior is not the main goal in community-based post-secondary correctional education. Success is not merely about leaving a life of crime, but rather in students developing life and academic skills necessary to be productive members of society, avoiding the traps of addiction and risky behaviors.

**Summary of the Study**

A qualitative case study comparison was conducted to explore the program characteristics and practices within seven CBPSCE programs within the United States. A total of eight interviews were recorded using an audio recorder which were then personally transcribed. One participant chose to type and email in their responses. Participants selected were school administrators, program directors, and faculty. Participants were asked to answer a series of open-ended questions covering the following categories: environment, role of the instructor and school administrators,
instructional strategies, curricula, student support and academic services and reentry services (Appendix B).

A detailed description of the phenomenon being researched required a review of the history and chronological events of each program, to include documents such as brochures, class materials (syllabi), and past studies conducted by social scientists. Archival records significant to review are the annual reports containing information on enrollment and completion rates and statistical data.

This researcher analyzed the data from this study to answer the research question, “What are the perceptions of, and policies employed by, the leaders of community-based correctional education programs?”, as well as offer guidelines to best practices.

**Implementation of Solution Processes and Considerations**

**Seamless Transition from the Department of Corrections to CBPSCE**

The aim of this study was to design a best-practices approach to CBPSCE programming, an evidence-based approach designed to reduce criminal behavior. This researcher presents strategies in tiers based on the level of criticalness to the success of the program. While I recommend that programs incorporate all three tiers, the model is designed to offer guidelines based on funding, available resources, and staff availability. Tier I outlines the practices and characteristics that are crucial to successful academic rehabilitation. Tier II offers additional practices and characteristics that are important to the process, but not critical. Tier III adds practices that are not critical to success, but are preferred. Figure 1 illustrates the model of the aforementioned three tiers.
### Tier One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Matriculation Begins in Prison</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Access Mission Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 28 Week Orientation Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Cultural Training for Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Open Door Policy for Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>- One-To-Many Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>- A Continuum of Reentry Services for students</td>
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### Tier Two

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Moderate Importance</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Cohort System for Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Student Advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strategic Language Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Service Learning Opportunities for Students</td>
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### Tier Three

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tertiary Importance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Education Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transformational Leadership Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Coordinate Faculty and Staff Backgrounds</td>
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*Figure 1. Three tier CBPSCE programming model*

**Tier I**

Tier I consists of the most important practices and characteristics that are crucial to successful academic rehabilitation. Tier one focuses on the external support needed by students to successfully acclimate into society and the academic setting.

**Matriculation begins in prison.** The success of CBPSCE programming manifests through the strategic and seamless transition from prison to college. Academic programs and the Department of Corrections must forge partnerships and create articulation agreements to offer post-secondary education to men and women who are
incarcerated. The research presented in this dissertation supports the relationship between the prison and the school as fundamental to the strategic transition from prison to college.

While incarcerated, men and women are in a structured environment and are able to reflect on the changes they need to make in their lives to begin the change process. Academic prudence becomes habit through routine, structure, and consistency- traits that are reinforced in their daily routines while in prison. This routine is set in motion and can be continued while the student is transitioning out of prison. While all areas in his or her life may become uncertain and chaotic upon release, the student is able to maintain a sense of structure through his or her learned school habits and routine.

The Department of Corrections can support the academic process by designating a learning space that allows post-secondary institutions to provide classes and academic services. CBPSCE programs need a space where they can conduct presentations to inform potential students on the benefits of post-secondary education and provide them with post-secondary options.

College representatives will complete the enrollment process and orientation for new students and begin academic and vocational counseling to help students plan their post-secondary pathways. Depending upon the articulation agreements, students can begin their academic journey upon enrollment either through correspondence courses, by earning vocational credits through the prison, or by taking courses offered to students at the prison by post-secondary faculty.

Articulation agreements with post-secondary educators. My research also supports the establishment of relationships between prisons and CBPSCE programs to create articulation agreements to ensure a seamless transition from prison to college.
Courses begin in prison via instructor or through correspondence courses with the support and assistance from the prison. Analysis conducted through this research indicates that men and women can receive post-secondary education through correspondence courses that offer paper-based associates, bachelor, and master’s degree programs.

Articulation agreements can be facilitated in two ways. First, universities and colleges can collaborate with community colleges to provide the first two years of education to incarcerated students. Articulation agreements made between two and four-year academic institutions ensure a seamless transition from prison to college. Secondly, articulation agreements can be made between two and four-year institutions and prisons that offer accredited career and technical education. As an example, one participant works alongside the Department of Corrections to coordinate articulation agreements with a local community college to allow students who successfully complete carpentry courses while incarcerated to receive elective credits towards their degree programs.

CBPSCE programs should maintain contact with those returning from prison until they can enroll into their programs. Academic programs play a significant role in the initial reentry phase by maintaining contact with those returning as they may be the only constant students have. Findings from this research support academic institutions as the cornerstone for previously incarcerated students by keeping students focused in an environment that helps maintain their newly acquired beliefs, values, and behaviors. Research indicates that admitting men and women who have been newly released from prison into post-secondary correctional education programs decreases the likelihood of returning to a criminal lifestyle (Tolbert, 2012).
Cultural training for programs. Program staff should be trained to create holistic and inclusive learning communities that are relationship-based. Analysis from this dissertation concludes CBPSCE programs are more likely to retain students and have a higher likelihood in achieving academic rehabilitation when they provide an inclusive and accepting environment.

An inclusive environment can be achieved by CBPSCE programs by having their own designated offices and classroom space within the college setting that fosters community and inclusivity. Students can begin to feel a sense of belonging and connection. This gathering place becomes a safe haven in which students can study together, provide peer and mentorship towards each other, and begin to build prosocial relationships with one another.

Open door policy and inclusivity as a practice. CBPSCE program staff should embrace an open door policy and tailor curricula to be meaningful and relevant to the student. Interviews conducted in this research support staff in maintaining an open door policy and tailoring curricula to the student’s experience. This practice conveys their availability and commitment towards students, as well as in making their academic experience relevant. Having an open door policy requires a program to remain open during breaks and certain holidays. As an example, two participants maintain an open door during school breaks and holidays to ensure their students have a consistent place to gather. Tailoring teaching methodologies and curricula to the student’s experience conveys a message to the student that they are equally capable of earning a quality education, thus reducing the shame they carry in having academic deficiencies.
Offering specialized curricula to meet the specific needs of the student creates a welcoming environment, invites a sense of belonging, while inspiring hope that redirects their lives in a more productive and socially acceptable manner (Tolbert, 2012).

**Role of faculty and school administrators.** School leaders should be trained in the *Access Mission* principles supporting the ideology that all students deserve an education. Access Mission practices afford students who cannot physically attend college, the opportunity to earn a degree through print-based or on-line degree programs, or by providing faculty to facilitate courses inside of prison complexes. The analysis in this dissertation indicates that school leaders must be supporters of the *Access Mission* and dedicated to maintaining strategic partnerships with the Department of Corrections and all community programs that assist in the reintegration process. For instance, school leaders ensure their institution is credit friendly through established articulation agreements to ensure the seamless transition from prison to college. School leaders are also committed to funding the CBPSCE programs through school resources, state, federal and/or private funding. Aside from being experts in their field of study, faculty must also be empathetic and understanding of the reentry challenges their students will face.

**28 Week orientation process.** The analysis conducted in this research indicated that students should complete 28 weeks of correctional education through and orientation process that transitions students from prison in to their post-secondary institutions. The most impactful and effective programs last over 26 weeks and meet at least twice a week. Programs that offer a minimum of 21 weeks and/ or offer over 100 hours of contact provide enough time to help address deeply entrenched maladaptive and dysfunctional
cognitive thoughts and behavioral patterns, as well as support the students through the ambiguities and challenges that accompany change (Lipsey, 1995).

This can be accomplished by having life skills workshops incorporated into the 28-week orientation process to address study skills and habits, physical wellness, financial and technology literacy, family reunification, legal issues, parenting, goal setting, character qualities, resilience, coping strategies, and drug/alcohol dependency.

Curricula should cover trauma-informed pedagogy that addresses family dysfunction, victimization, childhood abuse, abandonment, and neglect. Post-convicted students need information that addresses familial dysfunction, violence, and substance abuse as part of their curricula to better prepare them to live law-abiding lifestyles (Tolbert, 2012; Wright, 1997).

The curricula for the 28 weeks should be correction-specific courses using cognitive-behavioral instructional strategies and affective, non-cognitive behavioral practices. Exposing the previously incarcerated to correctional education centered on social competence, accountability, and cognitive development guides the student in learning to abstain from impulsivity and calculate the consequences of his or her behavior prior to acting (Ross & Fabiano, 1985). A multimodal approach to correctional education that includes curricula aimed at academic, social, and emotional development has proven to be twice as successful in reducing criminal behavior when cognitive development is included (Brazao et al., 2013; MacKenzie, 2012; Tolbert, 2012).

Findings from this research support the inclusion of non-cognitive and affective instructional strategies as an essential component to correctional education. Curricula that promote awareness of a student’s motivational habits, attitudes, and characteristics and
their own levels of perseverance, motivation, self-control, and mindfulness are examples of non-cognitive and affective strategies. Correctional education that balances cognitive-behavioral with non-cognitive and affective instructional strategies maximizes the capacity of the brain to encode new information (Vaske et al., 2011).

Intermediate English and math courses should be offered within the 28-week orientation. This research discovered a need to comprehensively address the academic deficiencies of students to better equip them with the skills needed to successfully complete their degree programs. Once students have completed 21 weeks of orientation, the final seven weeks should consist of basic English and math skills development to better prepare students for the rigor that will follow. Many participants in this research reported that their students completed their general education diploma in prison but were inadequately prepared for higher education. Offering intermediate math and English skills will better equip students for the courses they will begin to take at the college level.

**One-to-many model.** CBPSCE programs should be trained on how to implement a model that has students champion their own learning. Interviews conducted in this research conclude CBPSCE programming will have more success in matriculating, retaining, and reentering students into society if instructors implement a One-to-Many Model. This is achieved when instructors facilitate a learning environment where students provide support towards each other and are responsible for not only their individual learning, but the learning that takes place amongst their peers. CBPSCE programs that provide mentors and tutoring services further support the rehabilitative process. Students who progressed academically and completed their studies successfully due to having
support and resources such as tutors, peer mentors, and study groups had lower rates of reoffending than those who only participated and did not finish (DiMambro, 2007).

Faculty should adopt an andragogical approach to instruction. During the thematic coding of the interview data, an andragogical style of teaching emerged as an effective practice that involved the adult student in every phase of the learning process. CBPSCE instructors facilitated instruction through an interactive, student-controlled approach. Integrating holistic, process-based curricula that address real life issues through experiential learning validates the adult student’s experience and creates an environment where they can constructively change their situations (Brazao et al., 2013; Wright, 1997). Examples of interactive instruction provided during interviews consisted of team-building activities, Socratic seminars, and role-playing. Students who actively participate and take ownership in the learning process create an environment characterized by mutual trust, respect, and shared responsibility (Bergevin, 1967; Knowles, 1971).

**Reentry services for students.** A continuum of comprehensive reentry services must be incorporated into the process of academic rehabilitation. Analysis from this research supports comprehensive reentry services in the form of transitional services and workforce development sustained through strategic community partnerships. CBPSCE programs who offer a continuum of support services through community partnerships reduce the barriers associated with reentry. Academic institutions can accomplish this by having community partnerships and linkage agreements with community resources to assist students with food, housing, clothing, and transportation.

This researcher found that a major component to the 28-week orientation is providing students with workforce assistance. Workshops that guide the development of
professional portfolios while enhancing soft skills and employability skills will prepare students with 21st century work strengths. CBPSCE programs that maintain partnerships with felony-friendly employers and collaboratively prepare students for reentering the workforce were more successful in retaining students. Through interviews conducted by this researcher, CBPSCE programs and felony-friendly employers conducted mock interviews to better prepare students for the workforce. Many of these employers were able to hire them upon completion of the mock interviews.

The post-convicted have lost years of exposure to new technology, practicing soft skills, and maintaining technological competencies required to compete for jobs upon release (Davis et al., 2013). The majority of prisons restrict internet access and are often not funded to provide advanced technology (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011; Tolbert, 2012). Men and women leave prison unprepared to utilize the advanced technology required for even the most basic jobs. CBPSCE programming blended with technology will advance the learner with 21st century skills needed to compete for jobs (Tolbert, 2012).

Tier I consists of the most important practices and characteristics that are crucial to successful academic rehabilitation. Matriculation begins in prison with school and corrections leaders forging articulation agreements to create a seamless transition from prison to college. Staff and faculty foster this transition by maintaining an open door policy where students feel welcomed into an inclusive and holistic learning environment. Upon reentry back into society, men and women complete a 28-week orientation process where they gain the 21st century skills required in the current labor market. A continuum of comprehensive reentry services is offered to reduce the barriers associated with reentry. School and corrections leaders who cannot implement all three tiers must
implement the practices and characteristics in Tier I in order to offer academic services that are rehabilitative, as well as transformative.

**Tier II**

Tier II offers additional practices and characteristics that are important to the process, but not critical. Programs that only provide Tier I recommendations are still proving essential services to students however, adding Tier II recommendations would better enhance the quality and comprehensiveness of academic rehabilitation. Tier II focuses on providing structures that enhance the internal supports needed by students.

**Cohort system for students.** Students should complete the 28-week orientation in cohorts. This research found that CBPSCE programs who assigned students into cohorts were able to foster a relationship-based program where students began to bond as a family and rely on each other for reentry and academic support. Students enter into and complete the 28-week orientation with their own cohort.

**Student advisors.** Students should be assigned to a student advisor that is knowledgeable of and trained to meet the needs of the correctional student until they have successfully completed their degree program. Student advising emerged as a significant theme in my research. Students who had an assigned student advisor to serve as their point of contact were more likely to successfully complete their degree and/or vocational programs. Student advisors orient students to the post-secondary culture and perform individualized case management. For instance, a student advisor can provide additional services that may not typically be available in post-secondary settings. For instance, a student advisor can track progress, as well as conduct needs and risks assessments to
support the correctional student’s successful transition from prison to college by referring the students for the specific services that they may need.

**Strategic use of language.** The Department of Corrections and academic institutions, including community partners, should refrain from language that stigmatizes and labels students. Data that emerged from thematic coding supports the strategic and intentional use of language as the conduit to the transformation process. Programs must be intentional and strategic in their use of language as it ignites the re-identification process by having students identify with a new school identity. Men and women who are called felons, ex-cons, offenders, etc., carry with them stigmas that make mental and physical, and emotional reentry difficult. Participant interviews led this researcher to conclude that students who buy into these labels continue to mentally incarcerate themselves from opportunities to see himself or herself as someone different. When leaders and mentors reinforced their status as students, mothers, fathers, human beings, they began to see themselves accordingly and mentally removed their chains.

This prison to college pipeline must foster the re-identification process from *inmate* to *student* while providing the support structure and services needed by students in order to acculturate into post-secondary education. A sense of self is derived from group membership where the meanings, norms, and mores are defined and attached to that alliance. Individuals will define themselves based on that group membership and act accordingly (Haslam, 2011). Schools must provide an inclusive environment where students can become acquainted with a new circle of peers who inspire prosocial behaviors and positive mentorship. This process prompts students to re-identify their selves into a new community that rewards positive and law abiding behaviors. This re-
identification process is the key to success. Students see themselves as members of a community who can contribute to the betterment of others. They find their place and purpose in this world. Moreover, once they have established their new identities they have little reason to return to their previous behaviors.

**Service-learning opportunities as part of the learning process.** Opportunities for students to participate in service learning as part of their academic rehabilitation process should be required. The findings of this research support CBPSCE programs in providing service-learning opportunities to students to begin reestablishing trust within the community, as well as to begin fostering the desire to help others. Service-learning opportunities such as community service to feed the homeless, providing schools supplies to struggling families or donating gifts during the holiday season were mentioned by participants in this research as integral in transforming the heart and mind of a student.

Tier II offers additional practices and characteristics that are important to the process, but not critical. Programs who only provide Tier I recommendations are still proving essential services to students however, adding Tier II recommendations would better enhance the quality and comprehensiveness of academic rehabilitation. Tier II focuses on providing structures that enhance the internal supports needed by students.

Staff can enhance the transformation process by assigning students into cohorts who will then learn through experiential and service-learning opportunities. In this tier, student advisors assist students in the matriculation process and serve as mentors who will guide their academic journey. Students now have the support to increase their ability to handle higher levels of rigor required to complete college-level coursework.
The strategic use of language is the conduit to the re-identification process. The more successful programs immediately begin a strategic re-identification process by having men and women identify with a new school identity. Students become acquainted with a new circle of peers who inspire prosocial behaviors and positive mentorship and identify with a new community who can contribute to the betterment of others. They find their place and purpose in this world.

**Tier III**

Tier III adds practices that are not critical to success, but are recommended if funding and resources are available. Programs that offer all three tiers will provide the most complete and comprehensive academic rehabilitation for students.

**Education officers to serve as academic liaisons.** The Department of Corrections should assign education officers to assist in the facilitation of post-secondary education while students are incarcerated. Interviews conducted by this researcher revealed education officers as a valuable resource to the prison to college pipeline. Education officers are employed by the prison and are designated to facilitate a learning environment and support student learning within the prison. These officers can serve as proctors and as a point of contact to post-secondary educators who are offering correspondence courses, courses that are completed by mail. For instance, education officers can ensure students receive their materials via mail, as well as, be permitted to return their assignments to the school.

**Transformational leadership training.** CBPSCE directors should seek staff and faculty who are transformative or provide training to staff to enhance their transformative leadership traits. The analysis conducted in this dissertation indicates that the most
effective type of CBPSCE leader is a transformational and love-driven one. Faculty who were viewed as advocates were more successful in establishing the trust and relationship required to elicit intrinsic transformation and growth.

**Faculty and staff with similar correctional backgrounds.** CBPSCE programs should modify their hiring preferences to include staff and faculty who have a criminal history. The Department of Corrections must change their policies prohibiting men and women hired by post-secondary institutions who have felonies from working inside of the prison. This research supports CBPSCE programs in hiring staff and faculty who possess similar correctional experiences. Men and women who share similar correctional experiences and now have a successful career in education are even more influential as role models to correctional education students. Students can better identify with staff and faculty who share similar experiences and may be more likely to trust their guidance more than from someone who has not shared similar experiences. As an example, many CBPSCE programs hire men and women who have been previously incarcerated and are now passionate about the access mission. These men and women exemplify success after prison to students who are hopeless and seeking positive role models.

Taking a holistic approach to heal students creates a setting conducive for transformation of the heart and mind. School leaders who provide a balance of accountability and empathy are able to establish the trust needed for students to choose to become vulnerable to change. Once trust is established, students can thrive in an environment where they are able to process through their failures to reinvent their selves. Students are in a more conducive setting to elicit the intrinsic process of cognitive
reflection through their maladaptive behaviors and thought processes to reconstruct a prosocial way of thinking and behaving.

Academic rehabilitation is the final stage of rehabilitation and the beginning steps towards successfully sustained behavioral changes. Schools that inspire a transformative journey begin by helping students develop a higher sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem by experiencing a greater sense of accomplishment. As students begin to identify as college students and overcome the social stigmas and labels they once carried, they begin to feel a restored sense of hope in their futures. Programs achieve a successful outcome when a student reinvents a new sense of identity that changes their life path.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Key Players in Implementation**

Key players and their roles in planning, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of best practices are integral to the success of CBPSCE programming. Figure two summarizes roles and responsibilities involved in the prison to college pipeline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and Department of Corrections Leaders</th>
<th>Faculty and Education Officers</th>
<th>Case Managers</th>
<th>Community Partnerships</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Authorize funding, staff and space</td>
<td>Determine course offerings</td>
<td>-Serve as a student’s point of contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Determine articulation Agreements</td>
<td>-Conduct presentations and recruits</td>
<td>-Orient students to the post-secondary culture and perform individualized case management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Determine courses and schedules</td>
<td>-Complete the enrollment</td>
<td>-Advise students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Model and offer training on the Access Mission</td>
<td>-Facilitate learning</td>
<td>-Felony-friendly employers conduct mock interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Establish community partnerships and linkage agreements</td>
<td>-Serve as proctors and point-of contact for students</td>
<td>-Employers hire students upon completion of the mock interviews and workshops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Collect data and evaluate</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Ensure that programming is aligned with industry competencies and standards.</td>
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</table>
To initiate the process by planning the implementation of the prison to college pipeline, the directors from the Department of Corrections and the president of the academic institution must be present to authorize the funding and space required.

**Funding.** Directors from both institutions must determine who will fund each segment of the process and who will secure grant funding. Community correctional education providers and the Department of Corrections can accomplish financial sustainability by leveraging federal, state, and private funding sources. The most common funding sources include state corrections appropriations and adult education state grants through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education grants (Tolbert & Rasmussen Foster, 2016). Directors must create articulation agreements that create a seamless transition from prison to college. School administrators agree to accepting the vocational and college credits earned in prison. The allocation of staff must be determined and agreed upon in order to meet the needs of the prison, school, and students. Within this process, it is critical that the Department of Corrections commit to allowing a learning environment where prison administration allows instructors to teach in the manner and methods required to sustain change. All administrators must compromise on space allocation, commit to uninterrupted schedules, as well as implement the safe use of technology. Educators must have freedom to teach subject matter that is in the best interests of students and the safety of all staff.

**Delivering the seamless transition.** Directors within the prisons that manage prison education, as well as, the school dean and program directors must also be present...
in order to plan how their process will seamlessly streamline students into post-secondary correctional education upon reentry from prison. The director of prison education and the chair from the academic institution should really spearhead how the process matriculates and transitions students. Decisions to accept accredited vocation credits earned while in prison must also be determined. Directors from both institutions will need to determine course schedules and offerings, as well as which modes of education will be used. As an example, decisions must be made as to whether faculty will teach the courses inside of the prison and/or offer correspondence courses.

At any point of this process, any personnel who are considered by prison and school directors to be an integral part of this process should become a part of the planning phases. As an example, education officers, case managers, and faculty should become a part of the planning and/or implementation phase once hired into the program.

**Embedding the access mission.** Once the directors and school leaders have completed the stage of planning, the implementation phase is ready to be set into motion. Directors from both institutions have a role in creating an *Access Mission* culture by setting expectations for all staff, whether or not they are directly involved in the process, to support the mission of educating correctional students. This will involve training staff in the value of post-secondary correctional education as a component to rehabilitation and community reintegration. Support for the access mission must begin at the highest levels of administration and remain an expectation to which all are held accountable.

**Establishing community partnerships.** Once the Department of Corrections and the academic institution have completed the implementation phase and have established a program, the CBPSCE program must complete an environmental scan and begin
establishing community partnerships and linkage agreements with stakeholders to ensure they offer comprehensive reentry services for students. CBPSCE must maintain partnerships with felony-friendly employers and invite employers to become active members within the implementation, maintenance, and evaluation process. An advisory committee should be established consisting of employers and community partners who will meet on a regular basis to provide guidance to both institutions. This committee is fundamental in making recommendations to ensure the programming is aligned with industry competencies and standards.

The CBPSCE program and prison participants should conduct quarterly meetings to evaluate the prison to college pipeline. Prison and college leaders should collect data to support their efforts in reducing the barriers that lead to future criminal behavior. Prison and college leaders should also adjust and modify policies and procedures accordingly.

**Internal and External Implications for CBPSCE Programming**

There are many internal and external implications and challenges to implementing the aforementioned best practices. The external and internal implications for CBPSCE programming are taxpayer support, funding, and systemic compromise.

American society does not warmly embrace offering a college education to men and women who have been convicted of law violations (Grasgreen, 2015). The American criminal justice system was created based on retributive beliefs that a person’s behavior is corrected when they are punished (Schmalleger, 2014). Strategic leadership must engage and educate communities to embrace academic rehabilitation as an effective means to correct behavior. CBPSCE programs have the ability to habilitate a student’s frame of reference in how they begin to view themselves in relation to the world while
providing access to opportunities where they can become more productive members of society. CBPSCE programming affords students the opportunity to recreate their sense of identity as they come to identify with a new group of academic associates. This re-identification process creates a desire within students to choose to avoid further criminal networking and membership. By their own choice, students cut ties with old criminal affiliates as they become accepted amongst more prosocial ones.

Offering post-secondary education is met with strong resistance by the majority of citizens who are against offering expensive education to those who have violated the law when law-abiding citizens have to pay for higher education. Confronting this legitimate resistance will require CBPSCE programs to collect data to substantiate their existence and purpose. Concerned taxpayers and politicians need to see the research that validates the greater value in offering post-secondary education to those who have been convicted of crimes than solely incarcerating them.

Funding CBPSCE programs has also been problematic. Funding for correctional education began in 1972 when the Basic Educational Opportunity Program was established. The Basic Educational Opportunity Program was later renamed the Pell Grant (Welsh, 2002). Prior to the get tough on crime approach in 1994, there were many correctional education programs. 39 of the 50 states offered some form of post-secondary correctional education within the prison setting (Maguire & Pastore, 1994). During the get tough on crime era in 1994, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act suspended funding of higher education in prisons. In 1994, Congress amended the Higher Education Act to eliminate Pell Grant eligibility for students in federal and state penal
institutions (H.R. 3355, 1994). By 1997, 66% of correctional education programs were eliminated due to the amended Federal Pell Grant (Welsh, 2002).

The Obama administration has temporarily launched the Second Chance Pell grant as a pilot program for men and women in prison to revisit the power of post-secondary education as rehabilitative ("President Obama's 2016 Budget Seeks to Expand Educational Opportunity for All Students," 2016). This Second Chance Pell grant is a new funding initiative that will potentially increase the number of post-secondary correctional education programs to begin a new era of academic rehabilitation. Aside from limited and inconsistent governmental funding, CBPSCE programs are dependent upon the Department of Corrections, academic institutions, students, and private funding to pay for programming. In order for these programs to succeed, there must be a more comprehensive and consistent stream of money to fund CBPSCE programs.

Many participants of the research spoke of the academic limitations imposed when working with the Department of Corrections. Many spoke of the lack of space and support they received in collaboratively working together. In order to streamline correctional education from prison to college, all stakeholders must find a collaborative compromise conducive to a successful learning environment for faculty and students. All employees from the Department of Corrections must cooperate and support the access mission. More specifically, they must also embrace higher education for students as part of the corrective and rehabilitation process.

Implications for Action/Recommendations for Further Research

Post-secondary education research has found post-release outcomes to include increased educational attainment levels, improved post-release employment opportunities
and earnings, as well as aiding in the successful reentry back into society (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011; Meyer et al., 2010; Winterfield et al., 2009).

The specific characteristics and practices of post-secondary correctional education programs are equally influential in reducing a student’s future criminal behavior. Specific characteristics and practices such as: culture, role of the faculty and school administrators, curricula and instructional strategies, student support and academic services, and reentry services, contribute to the academic rehabilitative process.

This study was significant to correctional education as it sought to identify the specific program characteristics and practices that contributed to the reduction of criminal behavior to create best-practices guidelines. Guidelines not only ensure consistency amongst currently existing programs, but guide nationwide replication of evidence-based practices aimed to reduce criminal behaviors. Those likely to benefit from this study will be federal and state criminal justice agencies, post-secondary degree programs, and men and women who seek education after conviction and/or incarceration. These guides will provide an understanding of the holistic and academic approach that should be taken to make a program equally academic and rehabilitative. It also provides the prison to college approach, to include reentry services that must be present for student success.

Recommendations for future studies should look into the specific populations who benefit from CBPSCE education. It is recommended that future research inquire into the specific services and practices that would benefit women. Although this study took a general population approach that studied men and women collectively, it became apparent that services that are more specific to the needs of women must be made available to women who are single parents or who are in the process of gaining custody.
Future research should also look into the benefits of offering CBPSCE for high school students who are beginning to enter into the criminal justice system. Many high schools offer post-secondary, career and technical education and concurrently enroll students into college while in high school. Substantive research should look into implementing correctional education into this process to identify a best practice approach to not only habilitate criminal behavior, but to also serve as a prevention mission to redirect young men and women from entering into the criminal justice system.

It is also recommended that future research look into the specific mental health services that should be provided in the process. Many participants spoke of the need for trauma-informed pedagogy and services as many of their students have mental illnesses that have impacted their abilities to reintegrate back into society. Further research should be conducted into the mental health services needed by correctional students.

**Summary**

School administrators, program directors, and faculty from seven agencies nationwide participated as subject matter experts and shared their insights and experiences in CBPSCE offered within the community. An extensive qualitative case study analysis was conducted on all program materials, websites, and audiovisual material from each of their programs over a three-month period.

From manual coding of the transcribed interviews and program artifacts emerged five themes answering the question, “What are the perceptions of, and policies employed by, the leaders of community-based correctional education programs?”
The success of CBPSCE programming manifests through the strategic and seamless transition from prison to college by supporters of the access mission. Research found that successful community-based correctional education does not begin when men and women leave prison; it begins when they are in prison. Programs must forge community partnerships to create the prison to college pipeline to intentionally reduce the barriers men and women face upon reentry. This seamless transition has established articulation agreements that allow students to begin their academic journey by taking college courses while incarcerated to complete their degrees upon release.

This prison to college pipeline provides the support structures and services needed by students to acculturate into post-secondary education and maintain the routines and structures that became habits while imprisoned. This transition is supported by embedding wrap-around services though community partnerships to ensure students are met with a comprehensive continuum of services, to include opportunities for workforce development to gain employability skills.

Academic institutions serve as a cornerstone by keeping students focused in maintaining newly acquired beliefs, values, and behaviors. By taking a holistic approach to heal students while educating them, a setting is created where students are able to process through their maladaptive behaviors and thought processes to reconstruct a prosocial way of thinking and behaving. Faculty regarded as advocates, establish the trust and relationships required to elicit intrinsic change within students. CBPSCE programs must provide academic curricula that restructure the cognitive-behavioral aspects of a student. Cognitive-behavioral curricula embedded with non-cognitive and affective instructional strategies influences the heart and mind transformation.
CBPSCE programs must be intentional in their use of language. Men and women who are called felons, ex-cons, offenders, etc., carry with them stigmas that make reentry difficult. When they buy into these labels, they continue to mentally incarcerate themselves from opportunities to see themselves as someone different. When leaders reinforce their status as students, mothers, fathers, human beings, they begin to see themselves accordingly and mentally remove their chains. Language fosters acceptance.

Post-secondary institutions complete the strategic re-identification process by having men and women identify with a new school identity. Students become acquainted with a new circle of peers who inspire prosocial behaviors and positive mentorship. Students re-identify their selves into a new community that rewards positive and law abiding behaviors. Students begin to feel a restored sense of hope in their futures as they experience acceptance and contribute to the betterment of others. They find their place and purpose in this world. Moreover, once they have established their new identity they have little reason to return to their previous behaviors.

The findings from this research indicate that success is not determined by a student’s decision to continue crime; success is found when students develop the life and academic skills needed to break cycles of addiction and crime. Correctional education in the community is more about removing the barriers that men and women face upon return that tends to tempt them back into a criminal lifestyle.

The five key themes of this research guided the development of the best practices guidelines for CBPSCE programming. Degree and skill attainment alone are not the only contributors to reducing sustained criminal behavior. Nurturing the process of change
through acceptance and re-identification is critical. Academic rehabilitation is the final stage of rehabilitation and the beginning steps towards successful reintegration.
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Appendix A

Formal Letter Requesting Permission

Dear ____________________

This letter is a formal request for your participation in a research study. My name is Rebecca Rivera and I am a doctoral candidate at Creighton University. I am conducting a qualitative case study comparison of community-based post-secondary correctional education programs (PSCE) within the United States to identify program practices that contribute to the reduction of criminal behavior. These findings will be used to develop a best-practices model for community-based PSCE programs.

You have been identified as an expert in this field and I am requesting your participation in a recorded interview that may take up to 30 minutes to complete. I invite the faculty and staff who work for your program to also participate in a recorded interview. This interview will be transcribed and sent to you for review of accuracy and authenticity and will not be used without your signed consent. The interview can remain anonymous if you prefer. All interviews will be handled and stored to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

All results, to include the Best Practices Model, will be made available to you upon completion of this research. I look forward to working with and interviewing you. I am grateful to have your participation and promise to value your time.

Warm regards,

Rebecca E. Rivera

Doctoral Candidate at Creighton University
Appendix B
Interview Questions

General questions:

1. Tell me about your program and the specific services you offer to the post-convicted?
2. Can you tell me why your program was established?
3. What is the length of your program?
4. What is your student population? Gender? Age?
5. Please explain to me your role and position responsibilities.
6. Can you tell me about how the program operates and how it is sustained?
7. What type of technology is used by students in your program?
8. What characteristics do you find make an effective instructor in your program?
9. What academic support and services help retention?
10. How does your program define a successful outcome for a student?
11. Can you tell me the strategies used to correct/reduce criminal behavior?
12. To what extent does your program assist students in developing social skills and the ability to positively interact with others.
13. Does your program help students with challenges they may face in their personal lives?
14. What aspects of your program could be improved?

Closing Questions

15. In your opinion, what are the best ways that programs like yours can help students to reintegrate into civic and academic life?
16. How cost-effective is your program compared to prison-based correctional education?
17. If you could build a community-based post-secondary education program, what would it look like?
18. Is there anything else you would like for me to know?
## Appendix C
### Thematic Coding Process

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<tr>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
<th>Phase Two Coding</th>
<th>Phase Three Coding</th>
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<td>Academic Rehabilitation</td>
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### Appendix D

**Types of Qualitative Data and Measures**

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<th>Types of Data</th>
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<th>Definition of the types of instruments and documents</th>
<th>Examples of specific instruments and documents</th>
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<td>Course syllabus for each CBPSCE course offered</td>
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<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>Program created materials</td>
<td>Mission Statement, Newsletters, Video Recordings, Annual Reports</td>
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<td>Interviews</td>
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<td>Webpage, Brochures, Annual Reports</td>
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<td>Course outline</td>
<td>Course syllabi of all CBPSCE programs offered</td>
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<td>Course and Learning Objectives</td>
<td>Documented lesson plans and established learning outcomes for each course offering</td>
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