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Unlocking Doors for the Locked-Out: How Can Community Colleges Help to Demolish Barriers, Build Bridges, and Transition Male Ex-Offenders into the Workforce

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NATIONAL-LOUIS UNIVERSITY

UNLOCKING DOORS FOR THE LOCKED-OUT: HOW CAN COMMUNITY
COLLEGES HELP TO DEMOLISH BARRIERS, BUILD BRIDGES, AND
TRANSITION MALE EX-OFFENDERS INTO THE WORKFORCE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

In
COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

BY
JEANNETTE COLLINS-MOLDEN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

August, 2009

Community College Leadership Doctoral Program

Dissertation Notification of Completion

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Title of Dissertation UNLOCKING DOORS FOR THE LOCKED-OUT: HOW
HOW CAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES HELP TO
DEMOLISH BARRIERS, BUILD BRIDGES, AND
TRANSITION MALE EX-OFFENDERS INTO THE
WORKFORCE

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We certify this dissertation, submitted by the above named candidate, is fully adequate in scope and quality to satisfactorily meet the dissertation requirement for attaining the Doctor of Education degree in the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program.

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ABSTRACT

Over 670,000 adult prisoners were released in 2004. It is estimated that by 2010 over 1.2 million inmates will be released annually. The purpose of this study was to explore (a) barriers that male ex-offenders encounter in their pursuit of entering the workforce and (b) various types of education and support services that community colleges could provide in order to assist this marginalized population in overcoming these barriers. This qualitative case study was conducted at a community college offering programs that attracted a population of at least 50% male ex-offenders. Six male ex-offender students, four of the case study institution professionals, and two potential employers were interviewed for this study. Observations, documents, demographic questionnaires, and field notes were also used to gather data. The findings indicate clearly that male ex-offenders encounter a number of barriers to their entry into the workforce such as lack of education, recidivism, criminal background, and mindset. Screening, life skills, and connection and job placements were the three themes identified as various types of education and support services that community colleges could provide in order to assist this marginalized population in overcoming these barriers.

DEDICATION

“What a man can be, he must be” (Maslow 1970, p. 46)

In loving memory of my parents William C. Collins (1928-1978) and Dollie R. Collins (1929-2006), who provided me with a strong spiritual foundation and who taught me that anything is possible if you seek God first. To my sons and all the males in my family, my sincerest wish is for them to strive to become the men that God intended them to be.

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To the participants and case study institution, this research could not have been completed without your participation and willingness to provide invaluable information to assist me. To my academic cohort, I want to thank you for your support. To my professional cohort, thank you for allowing me the time and space needed to complete this academic process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Studies and reports have indicated that an enormous task is at hand with the reintegration of ex-offenders into the communities and the workforce. Henderson (2005) noted in a New York University Law Review, “It is estimated that, by the year 2010, nearly 1.2 million inmates will be released annually from the nation’s prisons and jails” (p. 1237). In 2005, over 7 million people were on probation, in jail, in prison, or on parole at year-end. That is 3.2% of all U.S. adult residents or 1 in every 32 adults (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). In 2005, over 35,000 ex-offenders were released in the state of Illinois and 94% of all released prisoners were male (Illinois Department of Corrections, 2005). The highest concentration has been in the Northern Region of Illinois with Cook County receiving 69.5% of Illinois’ ex-offenders reentering its communities (Illinois Department of Corrections, 2005).

A sustainable labor market and preparation for the labor market are essential for ex-offender transitions (Raphael & Weiman, 2005). The labor market is especially needed by ex-offenders who are seeking to reenter communities, reunite with their families, and obtain employment. . Raphael and Weiman further state that ex-offenders having insufficient skills and education are most likely to experience the tough cycle of recidivism. In order to break this cycle, Raphael and Weiman argue that acquiring an ability to obtain and retain employment with a reasonable income is paramount for ex-offenders. Thus education and training are key deterrents that must be used to stop the vicious cycle of recidivism.

The high numbers of ex-offenders returning to at-risk communities negatively impact these communities both socially and economically (Urban Institute of Justice Policy Center, 2006a). The cycle of recidivism also contributes to instability of the communities by constantly adding and removing people who commit crimes. Two-thirds of ex-offenders are apprehended and rearrested within three years of being released from prison (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007). In 2005, Illinois taxpayers paid over \$21,000 per capita for adult institutions (Illinois Department of Correction, 2005).

Inmates are being released with many issues including limited work experience, low levels of educational or vocational skills, and multiple health issues (e.g., mental health needs, substance abuse histories, and high rates of infectious diseases) (Uggen et al., 2005). Thus, when ex-offenders leave prison, there are basic needs that are inherent for this marginalized population, such as acquiring housing, education and better overall health (Urban Institute of Justice Policy Center, 2006a). One of the most challenging reentry issues ex-offenders struggle to overcome is the difficulty of gaining employment. These ex-offenders often lack the necessary skills and support services needed to acquire sustainable employment. Moreover, the employment rates and earnings of ex-offenders were relatively low even before the (mostly) men were incarcerated (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2003b).

The plight of ex-offenders seeking to enter the labor force proves to be a serious social and economic issue that must be addressed. Because community colleges are conveniently located in communities where ex-offenders reside, have open access admissions, and offer programs suitable to preparing this population for employment, the

community colleges can make a substantial contribution to addressing this issue by better understanding their ex-offender students.

Statement of the Problem

Although the mission of community colleges is to extensively address the educational needs of the communities they serve, today these institutions face many challenges, including limited funding, the growing diversity of the students enrolled, and a renewed demand for workforce development (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). A University of Oregon (1999) article stated, “Diversity means the understanding that each individual is unique and the recognition of our individual differences is equally important. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, etc” (p. 1). Ex-offenders, who are individuals that were formerly incarcerated, have been stereotyped into a marginalized group, and the number reentering our communities has increased at an alarming rate. These ex-offenders are often considered to be a non-trusted population within communities. Thus, they are critically in need of comprehensive services. The community colleges will have to find ways of assisting male ex-offender students through education and training that will create pathways into the workforce.

Purpose of the Study

Because ex-offenders are a large and growing marginalized population that has a substantial social and economic impact, assisting them to successfully reenter their communities is of importance to the country. As open enrollment institutions that meet the needs of their communities, the community colleges will have to address the ex-offenders’ situation through education, training, and supportive student services.

Therefore, this research study had a two-part purpose: (a) to explore barriers that male ex-offenders encounter in their pursuit of entering the workforce, and (b) to explore various types of education and support services that community colleges could provide in order to assist this marginalized population in overcoming these barriers.

Significance of the Study

Cohen and Brawer (2003) state that community colleges have existed to identify and respond to the educational needs of all adult learners. However, in the case of male ex-offenders, this is a tremendous charge to accomplish, especially considering the difficult social, political, and economic climate surrounding these students. Community colleges have always strived to meet the needs of the communities they serve. The multiple barriers facing ex-offenders present an opportunity for community colleges to continue to provide fundamental extrinsic support and education, as well as expand their positive presence and leadership in the communities.

The communities that are impacted by a large number of ex-offenders reentering society are in the greatest distress and need innovative changes to provide solutions that address the related challenges. As reported by the U.S. Department of Justice (2006), over 670,000 prisoners from state and federal prisons reenter a relatively small number of communities each year. Community colleges will need to be proactive in addressing the needs of this marginalized population, particularly the colleges that are located in the higher concentration areas. As shown in this study, it is not enough just to educate and train this population; the community colleges must become innovative in their approach and form partnerships with businesses and industries to ascertain a better transition for ex-offenders. Vocational skills training, education, and social skills training must be

provided prior to ex-offenders joining, or attempting to join the workforce. The integration of social behavioral training is paramount to the overall success of ex-offenders in the workforce and in society as a whole.

The community college mission has a history of expanding to meet the needs of its changing population. These institutions offer a wide range of services from the traditional college credit programs to vocational training, and continuing education. It is now time to develop additional strategies for addressing the ex-offenders in the communities who are locked out and marginalized from the workforce and mainstream society. Therefore, this research study explored the barriers that male ex-offenders face when they are released from prison back into the communities to become productive citizens through employment. This study also sought to discover innovative practices that community colleges can use to assist male ex-offenders in their pursuit of a place in the workforce.

Research Questions

Five research questions guided this qualitative case study:

1. How do correctional institutions prepare male inmates for entry into the workforce?
2. What types of programs are offered by the case study institution to assist male ex-offender students with entry into the workforce?
3. What types of barriers do male ex-offenders face in seeking employment?
4. How can the case study institution help ex-offender students overcome the barriers, thus facilitating entry into the workforce?

5. How can the case study institution obtain greater acceptance from employers for these graduating students who are marginalized ex-offenders?

Theoretical Framework

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was used as a lens to understand the multiple barriers faced by ex-offenders, including their criminal records, lack of education, job training, social skills, family support, community support, employment opportunities, lack of motivation, constant exposure to criminal elements, and other challenges related to the condition of being an ex-offender. This theoretical framework is also used to explain male ex-offenders' strong need for employment. Maslow (1970) asserts that human beings are motivated by fundamental common needs. The rungs of need start at the most basic levels that have to be realized before going on to the next rung of the pyramid. The rungs are Physiological Needs (basic life needs), Safety Needs, Belongingness and Love Needs, Esteem Needs, and Self-Actualization.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the most basic and essential human need is to achieve physiological comfort. The only legal self-supported method to provide these comforts for ex-offenders is through employment. However, many ex-offenders are ill prepared for employment upon release because their skill levels are minimal or non-existent. Without skills and training, ex-offenders are unable to enter the workforce at this point in their lives; therefore, they are unable to satisfy their basic needs. Remediation through education and specific skills training is necessary to enable change for this marginalized population.

Definition of Terms

Adult Basic Education (ABE). Adult Basic Education (ABE) is an educational instruction program for adults with less than 8th grade level educational skills.

Barriers. Barriers are anything that holds apart, separate, or hinder individuals from participating in various aspects of society

Belongingness needs. Belongingness needs are a rung in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which represent the human desire to belong or be a part or member of a group or social system (Maslow, 1970).

Communities. Communities are groups of people with similar characteristics living in the same neighborhoods or localities facing similar conflicts and barriers.

Conviction. Conviction is a judgment of the court based either on the decision of a jury or judge that the defendant is guilty of the crime for which he or she was tried.

Correctional facilities. Correctional facilities are local, state, or federally operated institutions, which may be jails, or state, or federal prisons where individuals are sentenced for a period of time by the legal system for crimes they committed.

Criminal background. Criminal background is a history of convictions or criminal records for individuals.

Esteem needs. Esteem needs are a rung in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs that explain how individuals assess personal worth, truths, insights, and personal regard in order to feel good or measure themselves (Maslow, 1970).

Ex-offenders. Ex-offenders are individuals who were formerly incarcerated in correctional facilities due to crimes they committed and are now released upon completion of time served (Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2007).

Felony. Felony is a serious crime punishable by more than one year in prison (Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2007).

Financial aid. Financial aid is need based federal funds (grants, loans, and/or work study) available for those students who meet eligibility requirements.

General Education Diploma (GED). General Education Diploma (GED) is equivalent to the High School Diploma for individuals who are at least 16 years of age and have not completed secondary education.

Incarceration. Incarceration is the confinement of individuals who have violated laws and are in jails, or state, or federal prisons to serve a determined sentence.

Institutional barriers. Institutional barriers are obstacles ex-offenders encounter upon entering an educational institution.

Labor market. Labor market is the market or exchange systems in which workers look for jobs and employers look for workers.

Life skill programs. Life skill programs offer nontraditional educational support services to individuals by providing training in how to deal with past decisions and make positive decisions in the future.

Marginalized. Marginalized is a word used to describe individuals (e.g., ex-offenders) or communities that are excluded from resources, services, and meaningful participation in society due to biased practices, policies, and programs.

Physiological needs. Physiological needs are a rung in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and include basic life needs such as air, food, drink, shelter, sex, and other driving physical requirements common to all humans (Maslow, 1970).

Pre-release. Pre-release programs are used to help begin the transition process of inmates by providing support services prior to their being released back into communities.

Prison. Prison is a State or Federal facility where convicted individuals who have committed a felony are held (Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2007).

Post-release. Post-release programs are used to provide housing, vocational, and health related services for ex-offenders reentering families and communities.

Recidivism. Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in the rearrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007).

Reentry. Reentry is a broad term referring to the transition of offenders from prison to community supervision. It applies to persons released from State or Federal prisons or discharged from State parole, Federal parole, or Federal Supervised Release (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007).

Safety needs. Safety needs are a rung in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs that relates to having an expectation of structure, safe circumstances, order, limits, stability and protection within a community (Maslow, 1970).

Socio-economic status. Socio-economic status means belonging to a certain social group with a certain economical rank determined by education, income, resources, and wealth that positions individuals or groups of people in hierarchal social classes which may be obtained through ascribed or achieved means (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2006).

Vocational skills. Vocational skills are developed through short term specialized training that articulates with labor market needs, and the training is documented by terminal certificates for employment (e.g., construction technology programs that offer extensive hands-on training).

Workforce. Workforce is a term that refers to individuals providing skills and services while employed in the labor market.

Workforce Investment Act. Workforce Investment Act is a federally funded program administered through states to provide financial assistance to need based individuals for short term training to enter the labor market (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study including the background, statement of the problem, driving questions, theoretical framework, and definition of terms as they are specifically used in this study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature that is essential to understanding barriers faced by ex-offenders, selection of the theoretical lens, a historical perspective of incarceration and prison populations, and the role of community colleges. Chapter 3 describes and explains the qualitative methodology and case study approach used to carry out the study. This chapter also describes the study's data collection methods and data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study by providing answers to the research questions. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings and their implications for community colleges. It also presents recommendations for community colleges and policy makers, as well as offering thoughts for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature that is essential to understanding barriers faced by ex-offenders and other primary aspects of this research study. The literature review begins with an analysis of three theories that help to explain particular dimensions of the study: Human Capital, Social Capital, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The second section examines previous research relevant to ex-offenders and their entry into the workforce, with particular attention to those studies that lend insight into the background of ex-offenders and the entry barriers they face when attempting to join the workforce. The literature shows that ex-offenders encounter multiple barriers in employment, education and training, support services, and other fundamental areas. Moreover, it supports the argument that these barriers must be addressed, as surmounting them is crucial in the process of achieving positive outcomes for ex-offenders, and reducing the potential for recidivism. The third section of the literature review examines successful programs that offer pertinent services, which help ex-offenders to overcome employment barriers. The chapter ends with a summary that explains how the research study contributes to the body of knowledge concerning ex-offenders.

Theoretical Framework

This section examines three theories: (a) Human Capital, (b) Social Capital, and (c) Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The Human Capital and Social Capital theories offer insights into the economic, educational, and social experiences of marginalized

populations, including ex-offenders. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a theoretical lens for examining an ex-offender's motivations, at more than one level, to be employed.

Human Capital Theory

The theory of human capital is based in economics and has been widely embraced in the United States, as well as globally. This theory is used to translate economics, people, education, skill, and individual attainment into scientific, measurable outcomes (Becker, 1975). Theodore W. Schultz (1979) first used the term human capital in a 1961 edition of the *American Economic Review*.

Gary Becker (1994), recipient of the 1992 Nobel Prize for Economics, describes human capital by using an analogy that involves people and their concern with economics. He states that people look at capital as a hundred shares of stock in IBM and a bank account. Becker (1994) asserts this is true because capital is an asset that produces income and is beneficial to people in this particular form. He further explains that other forms are equally representative of capital, such as acquiring computer training, trade skills, medical care, and good health practices. Becker (1975) also makes the point that education and training are essential components in the production of human capital.

Becker (1975) acknowledges the role of on-the-job training as another commodity in human capital because people learn more when they are trained beyond traditional schooling in a work environment. On-the-job training helps students who graduate from colleges and universities to prepare for full engagement in the labor market. Becker further draws an analogical comparison between investing in a human's education and training and investing in business equipment.

Theodore Schultz (1979), recipient of the 1979 Nobel Prize for Economics, agrees with Becker; he asserts a critical factor in human capital is the understanding that economics grows with the enhancement of the people, which includes the acquisition of medical care, education, and training. Schultz maintains that these acquisitions are an economic investment in human capital from an economic standpoint. Investment in the people or human capital is crucial to a sustainable labor market. His rationale is that people cannot be detached from their health, knowledge, skills, or worth in the manner they can be detached from their physical and financial assets.

According to Schultz (1979), the importance of added human capital depends on the added wellbeing that humans derive from additional steps or input to produce optimal outcomes. This is because human capital contributes to labor outcomes and entrepreneurial ability in various ways. Schultz asserts that labor productivity and entrepreneurial ability in human capital is equally important to farm and nonfarm production. He realizes that the dispensation through the use of productivity and entrepreneurial abilities helps in the attainment of education. Schultz also maintains that the attainment of education will contribute toward more opportunities to improve existing or future lifestyles.

Schultz (1979) proposes that there may be cultural and societal migration blended into a labor market relationship. This relationship acknowledges that education is important for people who hope for better job prospects, and these people hope for better places to live as a result of being better prepared to undertake these pursuits. Schultz also conceptualizes population quality as being in rare supply, which means it has an economic worth and its attainment involves a cost. In examining human behavior, he

concludes that the kind and amount of quality obtained over a period of time is an important key to evaluating the connection between the returns from added quality and the costs of obtaining it. People think that the investment in quality will result in better job prospects and higher earnings.

Schultz (1979) asserts that human capital and economics are intricately associated and the correlation will lead to improvement in the accumulation of population quality. This means that growth in the supply of any quality facet is a reaction to a demand for specific skills relating to the workforce. It is a supply-demand concept of investment behavior because all quality facets that are available are considered as durable rare supplies that are helpful over time.

Longer life spans give added value to obtaining more education as an investment in future earnings (Schultz, 1979). Yet, human capital investments will diminish over a period of time and decrease more rapidly in later life. Schultz contends that it is important that children have parents who invest more into their lives. There is a likelihood that input, such as education and training produces greater output of earnings.

The health capital aspect of human capital theory creates improvements in the productivity of workers in the labor market (Schultz, 1979). Schultz asserts that these improvements are necessary because they contribute to the vitality and good health of individual workers. In his role as a highly regarded empirical economist, he traveled to various farms to gain knowledge that would assist him in analyzing agriculture and economics. Schultz used these travels and communications with various people as a foundation to help design his concept of human capital.

During one of Schultz's (1979) travel explorations, he observed an elderly couple who were obviously poor, but happy with their existence and their belief that education enhances productivity and income. The couple's belief was reinforced by the ability to invest in their four children's education due to earnings received from their farm. This insight is the basis Schultz uses to support his argument that poor people have the same concerns as more affluent people about preparing themselves and their children to have greater economic gains. Schultz draws the conclusion that people with limited or no resources, as well as more affluent people share certain beliefs. These beliefs inspire them with the hope that preparation and action will translate into employment, social status, and general feelings of empowerment. Thus, these beliefs are associated with becoming a productive commodity within society as a whole.

Researcher, Patrick Fitzsimons (1999) of the University of Auckland states that "in modern Human Capital Theory all human behavior is based on the economic self-interest of individuals operating within freely competitive markets" (p. 1). Fitzsimons agrees with Schultz's perspective that these very basic needs correspond across all economic lines. These needs are pressing to those who are poor as well as to those who have more economic advantages.

Spring (1999) states that politicians and the business sector view human capital as a means for making positive assurances of compensation for those who are willing to invest in education. Moreover, Spring describes human capital as being relevant to economic conditions that are realized through an increase in wages and improvements in the environment of a global economy. Some authors have used human capital mainly to explain aspects of the labor market, including disparities of income (Heckman &

Krueger, 2004; Henry, 2007). The income disparities of certain groups are apparent when studied extensively by economists; race and gender are of major concerns when analyzing disparities in the labor market.

Henry (2007), a researcher, concurs with Heckman and Krueger (2004), professors of economics, stating that disadvantages of the labor market arise because certain groups or individuals have varying levels of education. They also assert that acquiring education receives greater recognition from those who equate advanced levels of education with higher levels of success. Moreover, Henry thinks that those individuals who disagree with this perspective will not invest in their own human capital. Those who do not prepare themselves for a profession will remain ill prepared for opportunities in employment that are associated with higher earnings. Thus, ill prepared groups will continue to enter and function at the bottom of the economic scale with lower wages (Heckman & Krueger; Henry).

The theory of human capital helps to explain factors that contribute to an individual's immobility or failure in the labor market. However, these factors are not a barometer, as fluctuations may occur when other variables are present that may hinder productivity in the labor market including sexism, racism, classism, and uneven quality across the educational system (Heckman & Krueger, 2004; Henry, 2007). For example, a "2007 Census Poverty & Income Data" report (National Urban League Policy Institute, 2007) verified that certain groups, such as African Americans and Latinos, are three times more likely than whites to live in poverty. Those who are in the lower socioeconomic sector do not have the resources to invest in their own human capital and they may not understand the importance of furthering their education and training.

In summary, human capital theory is one way to view the connection between education and income. However, if resources are few, and the rationale connecting education and income is missing, there are other factors involved that require different methods to offset the shortfalls. The barriers faced by ex-offenders are not just economic in nature; therefore, human capital theory, although useful in understanding the implications of education and training in the job market, does not provide a sufficiently comprehensive lens for analyzing the findings of this study.

Social Capital Theory

In the United States, society has been formed by the relationships of families, groups, organizations, and communities functioning according to some interrelated commonality. However, relationships can also falter due to breakdowns in the functionality of various social groups as a result of internal or external influences. According to Mark K. Smith (2007), who is a Rank Research Fellow and Tutor at YMCA George Williams College in London, the term social capital was first used in 1916 by Lyda Judson Hanifan, a state supervisor of West Virginia's rural schools, to convey the concept of "goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy, and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families" (p.1). This concept led Hanifan to urge those in his rural school district to become involved in the educational process. The common goal of involvement would constitute a form of social capital, and by contrast, failure to embrace the interrelated commonality could impede the functionality of the common goal for members of social groups. The term social capital was subsequently used when describing the end of cohesive neighborhoods contributing to a state of decline and deterioration in U.S. cities.

Harvard political scientist, Robert Putnam (2001) similarly says that social capital refers to the binding of people in a social context, which is inherently necessary for social organizations. These organizations can be comprised of families, friends, religious affiliations, political ties, and various networks formed through a social trust. The cooperation achieved by these social groups is used to create bonds of trust with mutual benefit to all members of the group.

According to Lin (2007), Oscar L. Tang Family Professor of Sociology at Duke University, social capital is the achieved goals acquired through the use of connections and relationships. These relationships critically strengthen individuals and groups through the commonalities of generally understood thoughts, feelings, cooperation, and understanding among the members. Lin states it is this sense of sameness that creates interrelated linkages with the members of groups.

Malloch (2003) uses explanations provided by the aforementioned experts to assert that social capital is a theory that explains the actions of groups as opposed to individuals. According to Malloch, the importance of like goals, shared values, trust, understanding, and other behaviors are essential to the link that binds members to certain groups. He contends that these elements are then bound together and translated into the productive means needed to enhance the labor market.

The concept of social capital has also been examined by others, including Theory Criminologists Dina R. Rose and Todd R. Clear (2002) of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. These criminologists conceptualize this theory as being directly applicable to the social aspect of its connection to communities. They state that the social capital theory has not been used to fully explore the adverse affects of the absence of

shared goals among certain social groups. Nevertheless, crime is a component of social capital because, as Rose and Clear argue, certain groups or communities with little or no social control are often impoverished. These communities also have a high number of unemployed, uneducated, unskilled groups of people, such as marginalized ex-offenders.

While there appears to be agreement that social capital adds to the quality-of-life of a community, theorists have had difficulty in describing this phenomenon. Some social capital theorists tend to agree that the concept of social capital is of significance for communities because the theory helps to explain the need for residents to understand shared goals (Lin, 2007; Malloch, 2003). Rose and Clear (2002) state that shared goals will involve efforts to decrease crime, improve supervision of children, and amass new resources for the good of the community or social environment.

In summary, social capital is considered to play a major role in the fabric of the U.S. social system; therefore, it is considered to be an important theory to discuss in this literature review. Social capital theory focuses on the shared commonalities and feelings of connectedness that exist within the confines of social groups, which may contribute to cohesive communities. However, not all groups live in this type of community setting. Marginalized ex-offenders attempting to enter the workforce and other established social groups are perceived as being outside the normal group. Therefore, while the social capital theory is informative, in itself, it is not sufficiently suitable to serve as an analytical lens for this study. This theory does not provide insights into lower socio-economic groups of ex-offenders who face barriers preventing their entry into the workforce and acceptance by the communities in which they live.

The third, and final, theory that will be discussed is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This theory addresses the whole person as an individual and provides insights that can serve as a useful framework for the analysis of data and findings in this research study.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is beneficial to this study because the theory encompasses individualistic economic achievement, the root of human capital theory, and the relatedness to others, found in social capital theory, as well as human motivations. Thus, Maslow's hierarchy of needs enables the researcher to explore a complex human phenomenon using a multifaceted theoretical framework.

Abraham Maslow (1970) formulated his theory of motivation to explain humanistic needs and specific human potentialities. His theory contrasted sharply from the prevailing limited approaches that emphasized deficiencies, which Maslow thought were not able to adequately describe or portray humanistic needs. Maslow categorized basic needs into five ascending levels, now known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, to make sense of how human beings develop their potential. He recognized that it is with much difficulty or impossible to transition to the next level without fulfilling certain basic needs.

William G. Huitt (2004) of the Department of Psychology and Counseling at Valdosta State University, in Georgia argues that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory is important because it indicates that all humans are motivated by similar needs, which are hierarchical in nature. The rung of needs start with the most basic that must be realized before humans can go on to the next rung; if basic needs are not met, it is impossible to

rise above a certain status. Maslow also explained in his writings the fact that if humans are able to rise to the next level, this status is tenuous because if any level is threatened and removed, the humans find themselves back at the lower rung of physiological needs (Huitt, 2004). As explained by Maslow (1970) and discussed by Huitt, Boeree (2006), and Eckerman (1968), who was Director of Personnel in the Governor's Office of Administration, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Hierarchy of Needs theory is conceptualized as a pyramid with five rungs: (a) physiological needs, (b) safety needs, (c) belongingness and love need, (d) esteem needs, and (f) self-actualization.

Physiological needs. Basic physiological needs, as described by Maslow (1970), comprise the bottom rung of the pyramid of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. He states that basic needs can be divided into two categories: homeostasis and preference. Homeostasis needs, according to Boeree (2006), naturally transpire within the body and automatically seek to maintain actual nutritional requirements that the body needs in order to survive. Boeree states that these needs drive the body to run efficiently by seeking and processing oxygen, water, food, vitamins and minerals, sleep, sex, a certain level of fitness, and exercise. New essential or preference needs are developed once an existing need is satisfied. Maslow further explains these concepts by providing illustrative examples. If an individual requires fulfillment in other areas of need, that person may misinterpret the need, thus the person may select food as a substitute, instead of identifying the correct need. The body's need to maintain homeostasis is vital (Eckerman, 1968).

Maslow (1970) asserts that physiological needs are instinctive; for example, having a hunger craving would send other needs into dormancy until hunger is satisfied. The dominant physiological needs take precedence over other needs that may ultimately

affect future needs if not satisfied (Huitt, 2004). However, as noted by Maslow (1970) human beings are always striving for more and when one need is satisfied, humans have a tendency to seek higher attainment in their lives. Using the satisfaction of hunger abatement as an analogy, Maslow suggests that humans are then hungry for something greater than the previous hunger. To satisfy one need is beneficial because this enables other needs to emerge, thus moving the individual upward in the hierarchy of needs pyramid. Maslow maintains that those who have always had their needs satisfied are able to withstand and cope better, when, or if, deprived of their needs at anytime compared to those who have always been deprived of their needs in the past.

Safety needs. The second rung of Maslow's hierarchy comprises safety needs that emerge when physiological needs have been met (Boeree, 2006; Eckerman, 1968; Huitt, 2004). Some of the safety needs are security, stability, protection, freedom from fear, and freedom from anxiety and chaos. Safety needs also encompass desires for structure, order, law, limits, and confidence in knowing the strength of the protector (Maslow, 1970). These human needs, characteristics or motivations are equally, or sometimes more important than physiological needs (Eckerman, 1968). Maslow (1970) thinks that these needs are at the core of human cravings from infancy to adulthood and they manifest themselves as the need for safety and order in people's lives. This class of need is often interpreted as security needs (Eckerman).

Maslow (1970) believes that basic needs for safety and order must be met before individuals feel safe enough to function in society with a reasonable expectation of familiar versus unfamiliar elements. He states that humans will function in either a negative or positive way. In the negative mode (lack of safety needs), they will react out

of fear as a repercussion or neurosis. Humans will function positively (safety needs are met) if there is a reasonable expectation of existing in a safe environment. Maslow says that humans will assume they are useful and able to navigate effectively throughout society if they are safe. He asserts that being in a healthy state does not exempt humans who are accustomed to feeling safe from reacting and responding differently when safety conditions are questionable. These responses are apparent when their state of safety is threatened or they are living on the fringes of questionable safety.

Belongingness and love needs. Maslow (1970) suggests that as physiological and safety needs are met, other needs related to love and belonging will emerge. These needs are the basis for relationships with friends, sweethearts, children, and family, as well as social groups (church affiliation or social organizations). People desire to be a component of interactive dynamics with others to achieve a sense of belonging (Huitt, 2004). When this need is not met, the negative affects associated with deprivation can lead to antisocial actions. Maslow asserts the absence of belonging and love provides a false picture that love is unimportant, friendships are unnecessary, isolation is normal, and connectivity to anyone or group is unwarranted.

As explained by Maslow (1970), a positive outcome will be achieved after opportunities are given to individuals to meet basic needs. Therefore, addressing the fulfillment of basic needs is essential to the wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and other groups (Huitt, 2004). When basic needs are met, there will be a compulsion to seek feelings of belongingness and love.

Maslow argues that basic needs drive the capacity to address other needs, and an individual cannot progress upward in the hierarchy, until gratification of physiological

and safety needs is achieved (Boeree, 2006). The gratification of the first two needs then transforms into a catalyst. This catalyst will propel humans forward to intensely search for the third need, a quest to satisfy their hunger to belong and love, as opposed to heading toward isolation and alienation (Maslow, 1970).

Esteem needs. The fourth rung in Maslow's hierarchy comprises esteem needs that establish self-esteem and self-respect as the yardstick to measure and evaluate self (Eckerman, 1968). This need is divided into two parts:

Desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom; desire for reputation or prestige (defining it as respect or esteem from other people), status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity, or appreciation. (Maslow, 1970, p. 45)

The esteem needs give credence to one's own expectation of self, without needing others to justify feelings of esteem. Low self-esteem results in feelings of inferiority or worthlessness, which signal the potential existence of an unhealthy, underlying neurosis. When a neurosis emerges, it becomes an impediment to the development of esteem needs and further growth, if not addressed with intervention (Maslow, 1970).

Need for self actualization. The fifth rung in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is the need for self-actualization. According to Maslow (1970), the term self-actualization was originated by Kurt Goldstein and alludes to the greatest potential humans can attain. Maslow posits that self-actualization is achieved by expressing a human's need to explore his potential to the best of his capabilities: "What a man can be, he must be, he must be true to his own nature" (p. 47). The first four categories of needs comprising the hierarchy contribute greatly to the possibility of emergent self-actualization, which then helps the person to satisfy and celebrate individual differences in the quest to operate at

his greatest potential and ability (Huitt, 2004). Maslow (1970) further explores his theory by identifying preconditions that are relevant to the satisfaction of basic needs prior to realizing self-actualization.

Preconditions for basic need satisfaction. During this phase of striving to achieve self-actualization, Maslow (1970) asserts that humans must be free to speak, express themselves, gather information and have an expectation of being able to set goals. He further states that humans must be able to discuss positions or provide explanations for involvement in various situations. These discussions must allow people to defend themselves, seek justice, and explore wishes, hopes, and dreams. He states that individuals should be able to bring their self-concepts to fruition without harming others.

Maslow (1970) states, a man should have the ability to use cognitive skills that include developing coping skills and intellect through learning. He argues that a human is capable of taking action based on the belief that heightened perceptions from certain experiences will aid the process of achieving self-actualization.

Desires to know and understand. Maslow regards the need to know and understand as an important cognitive desire to make sense of events and situations (Eckerman, 1968). In a human's desires to know and understand, it is imperative that the individual be enabled to eliminate or alleviate negative determinants such as fear, anxiety, negative impulses, and natural curiosity, which serve to undermine cognition because the individual is puzzled by situations where clarity is needed (Maslow, 1970).

Maslow (1970) asserts that the desire to know and understand is a phenomenon that forms as a process necessary to defuse or negate dangerous situations. It is especially important when needed to overcome certain obstacles and weaknesses that

require knowledge to resolve cognitive issues (Eckerman, 1968). Maslow concludes that the ability to formulate positive impulses is directly related to understanding, helping, and developing systems of values for self-actualization.

Aesthetic needs. Maslow argues that the idea of aesthetics is an acknowledgment that some people must have a degree of order (Eckerman, 1968; Huitt, 2004). They also have a desire for beauty to surround them in order to thrive and remain healthy while they continue their quest to meet basic needs.

Degree of fixity of the hierarchy. Maslow (1970) explains that the five tiers or rungs of the pyramid in his Hierarchy of Needs are positioned in a specific order; however, he asserts that there is no rigidity in following the tiers for some people. He supports this perspective by explaining that a person who seeks respect may give the impression that he is confident. Maslow would then interpret the person's actions as revealing that love is not an important issue in this person's life.

Degrees of relative satisfaction. Maslow (1970) makes other suppositions about the satisfaction of needs and the basis of when or how other needs emerge. The underlying premise is that 100% of each need must be met prior to emergence of the next need. However, this is not necessarily the case because people are always in various stages of being partially, and simultaneously satisfied and unsatisfied in acquiring basic needs. The level of importance to the individual decides relevant percentages of satisfaction and non-satisfaction.

Cultural specificity and generality of needs. Maslow (1970) states, the classification of basic needs create some efforts to understand the fundamental unison behind the superficial diversities in individual desires from one society to another. The

most obvious disparities are in the superficial dimension, such as differences in clothes, style of hair dress, and taste in food. According to Maslow, the general understanding of anthropologists is that humans in different cultures have more in common than they would have thought with their first encounter. Maslow asserts that basic needs are relatively more universal and ultimate than superficial individual desires, thus coming closer to common human characteristics.

Multiple motivations of behavior. Individuals have multiple motivations that are the impetus in driving them to achieve fulfillment of their basic needs (Maslow, 1970). According to Maslow's multiple motivations of behavior, when the driving force is identified as being physiological, other needs are then minimized. The minimization of other needs will remain stagnant until desires driven by physiological needs are satisfactorily met for the individual.

Maslow (1968) formulates four basic assumptions: (a) humans are biologically inclined, or intrinsically driven to be true to self; (b) individuals are unique by nature and share characteristics that are unique to all humans as well; (c) humans have an inner nature that is capable of being scientifically identified and explored without inventing or falsifying; and (d) individuals possess an inner nature comprising good, evil, inherent and essential characteristics that allow for interactions. Maslow maintains that these critical elements are essentially useful for living, loving, safety, and belonging to groups. They also allow individuals to go beyond themselves by seeking to share degrees of connectivity in their community. Maslow argues that these attributes allow each individual to develop self-esteem, achieve respect validated by others, and to self-actualize. Ultimately, when basic needs are satisfied, Maslow asserts that these

individuals could use their capabilities to create personal opportunities to be all that they can be.

According to Maslow (1970), a comparison can be drawn between basic needs, which are “instinctoid” in humans and equivalent instincts in animals (p. 83). Humans begin with an extremely fragile nature that is then shaped as a person evolves physically, mentally, and socially (Boeree, 2006). If the environment is suitable, humans will develop and actualize the capabilities they were presented with at birth. If the environment is not conducive, as is often the case, humans will not undergo the development needed to actualize their capabilities (Maslow).

Vulnerabilities in Maslow’s theory. Maslow’s theory of basic needs, which explains how people are motivated, has great relevance today as it did when he first introduced the theory; however, there are some criticisms of the theory that must be addressed (Boeree, 2006). Maslow stated that his study was only the beginning of a framework and the research should be furthered in a more rigorous manner (Eckerman, 1968).

One criticism is that Maslow based the study on men he thought had already achieved self-actualization (e.g., Abraham Lincoln and Albert Einstein), thus leaving a weakness because this targeted population may not be generalizable; they might not have had some of the same experiences or struggles as people in the lower levels of society. Moreover, Maslow did not address whether the framework would apply to women.

Second, Maslow explains in the degree of fixity that the five rungs of the pyramid of the Hierarchy of Needs are arranged in a specific order; however, there is no inflexibility in the transitioning process from one rung to the next for some individuals.

Yet, it can be argued that humans like musicians and athletes can transition from the lower rung of physiological needs to self actualization without going through the entire lower rung (Boeree, 2006). Although this argument has credence, many of these individuals will fall back down to the lower rung because once their talent is gone or no longer becomes useful they find their physiological needs are threatened.

Analysis of the Theories

Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory each have applicability to the labor force. However, Human Capital Theory focuses on the individual and involves a limited, mechanistic rationale for labor force qualification and entry into the labor market. The rationale has four fundamental characteristics: (a) individuals must be willing and able to obtain education and training specific to the labor force; (b) individuals are referred to in economic terms, as elements of production; (c) individuals who are unable to "invest" in themselves to acquire training and development are not considered by the theory; and (d) individuals are viewed as only being motivated by the pursuit of personal wealth.

By comparison, Social Capital Theory focuses on the cohesiveness of certain groups and their achievement of economic success through a synergistic work effort. According to the Social Capital Theory, individuals with a set of skills, information, training, and education are needed to achieve results for an economic purpose in the labor market or other social systems. However, in Social Capital Theory, those without the requisite skills or attributes would not fit into the framework of this theory.

Thus, the analysis of Human Capital Theory and Social Capital Theory has revealed their limitations in addressing characteristics of the ex-offender population and

shown that they are not suitable as a theoretical framework for this study. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory provides a broader lens that takes into view the whole person, as well as individual basic needs that apply across socio-economic levels. Maslow (1970, 1968) argues that all humans have potential, and at various levels of existence they strive to satisfy inherent basic needs that ultimately lead to human development. Maslow's theory of motivation goes beyond individual achievement and social outlooks; the theory provides insights pertinent to understanding the well being of marginalized ex-offenders who need to enter the labor market. Maslow also asserts that all human beings are alike in the very essence of being human, but at the same time they are unique as an individual self. Thus, this study uses Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as its theoretical framework.

Historical Overview of Incarceration

This historical overview of incarceration in the U.S. provides important background information for the research study and includes an analysis of the rationale for punishments; why, how, and with what underlining messages are punishments rendered? Perhaps surprisingly, prisons are relatively new institutions in the U.S. Carolyn Eggleston (2003), at the Center for the Study of Correctional Education, California State University, San Bernardino, states, "it is important to recognize that correctional education is relatively new because prisons are relatively new. Prisons did not obtain their current focus until the last few hundred years; before that law breakers were killed, maimed, or sent away" (p. 2).

Solomon, Johnson, Travis and McBride (2004), in a report for the Urban Institute Justice Policy Center, state, "According to the Quakers, who created the American penitentiary; work was integral to the reformatory process" (p. 15). The Quakers

believed that placing individuals in isolation or solitary confinement for rigorous study of the Holy Bible would provide moral guidance. The Quakers thought that they could provide help for those accused of wrongdoing by giving the wrongdoers opportunities to seek penance and to reflect on their crimes. According to Hirsch (1992), the first prison facility, Walnut Street Jail, was built in 1790 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This jail was constructed for the dual purposes of punishing and rehabilitating prisoners. After prisons became more established, they were troubled by abuses, exploitations, and struggles resulting from a lack of understanding concerning how prisoners should be managed in the penal system.

Why We Punish

James Whitman (2003), Professor of Law at Yale University, asserts that the U.S. practices of criminal punishment were initially viewed as being the most evolved and compassionate when compared to other nations. Europeans affiliated with criminal punishment systems came to study the American's structure of setting up prison systems in the early nineteenth century. But, in the twenty-first century, the situation is quite different. The U.S. has the highest rates of incarcerations in the world, it incarcerates more often, and it metes out severe punishments at a much higher rate than other countries, such as Germany and France (Whitman). According to Whitman, the western world no longer seeks American's guidance associated with humane punishment. They now look away from the U.S. system when considering models for restructuring their penal systems because it yields harshness and sometimes brutality.

Moshe Halbertal, (as cited in The New School, 2006), Professor of Jewish Thought and Philosophy at New York University School of Law, states that punishment

is meted out to achieve several purposes. The first purpose is deterrence, which is an attempt to hinder or deter an individual from committing crimes. The second purpose is retribution, which is demanded when an individual has committed a crime. It is an act of justice that some form of punishment is given to make an individual pay in a legal manner for crimes committed. The primary use of retribution is an effort to appease the wrongs done to other individuals or society. Halbertal posits that the final purpose is forgiveness. He contends that forgiveness operates under an implied premise that an individual has paid his or her debts. These debts incurred by the individuals for crimes they committed are then paid to society upon completion of time served in prison (The New School).

George Kateb (2007), Professor Emeritus of Politics at Princeton University, proposes that appropriate justification for punishment is more democratic if deterrence is the first and foremost purpose, thus he maintains that society should do all that is possible to hinder or deter crime. Kateb argues that failure to deter crime results in the use of harsh penalties that are anti-democratic. Although, he recognizes the use of harsh penalties as being steeped in the Old Testament or Kant's theory when there is need for retribution, Kateb argues that the judicial process must insure fairness when determining the crime committed. He asserts that due process of law, as a fundamental foundation of the legal system, should include leniency when warranted by a moral consideration (Kateb). Examples of leniency, as described by Kateb, are mildness of punishment and presumption of innocence. Moreover, Kateb states that the presumption of innocence must be held to the highest standard.

What and How We Punish: Law, Justice and Punishment

Michael Tonry (2007), Sonosky Professor of Law and Public Policy at the University of Minnesota, explains that the historical basis of American punishment practices is that people must be held personally responsible for their actions. This is an answer to social needs, determining that the perpetrator must be punished and the victim must be avenged. Nevertheless, Tonry also states that exploration of changing patterns related to class, economic status, race relations, and social practices should be analyzed and factored into punishment decisions. Tonry emphasizes the necessity of applying careful thought to issues regarding punishment.

Population Description and Background of Ex-offenders' Reentry

Social Dynamics of Incarceration

According to Golembeski and Fullilove (2005), of the Department of Sociomedical Sciences, Mailman School of Public Health, at Columbia University, the prison population grew rapidly in the later part of the 20th century due to changes in the sentencing procedures; harsher retaliatory approaches were designed in an effort to decrease crime. Bruce Western (2002), Professor of Sociology at Princeton University, asserts that the U.S. prison populations have been rapidly increasing during the last 30 years, swelling to over 2 million people. Moreover, the majority of prisons are disproportionately filled with black men who have minimal or almost no education. He reports that approximately 60% of incarcerated African American males are high school drop-outs, in their thirties, and had a prior history of serving time in prison. Western states that when a large number of people in an identifiable diversity group are incarcerated, a direct relationship to increases in social inequality emerges. Upon release

from prison, Western suggests that members of this marginalized group, now categorized as ex-offenders, will likely experience great difficulties in achieving economic wellbeing. Therefore, they will be relegated to the lowest level of socioeconomic status. Western concludes that in the early years of the twenty-first century, the U.S. penal structure is less about reducing crime and more about preserving the existing system of social stratification.

Golembeski and Fullilove (2005) state, accessibility and consumption of illegal drugs in the latter half of the 20th century have been used to justify harsher sentencing guidelines. They further assert that the push for stricter drug policies has contributed to revolutionary changes in sentencing, thus increasing prison populations. As noted by Golembeski and Fullilove, the problem of drugs is not new. They argue that, in the 1960s, countless impoverished urban neighborhoods experienced an increase in the number of heroin abusers. Growth in cocaine usage in the 1970's, crack cocaine's rise in the late 1980's, and the continuing spiral of drugs into the 2000's are all factors associated with increased incarceration. However, paradoxically the harshness of sentencing policies, large number of people incarcerated, and the ultimate release of ex-offenders back into the communities has resulted in more unresolved major issues for society.

Golembeski and Fullilove (2005) assert that drugs have markedly influenced federal prison systems, as illegal substance abuse offenses accounted for 74% of the growth in prison populations between 1985 and 1995. In 2000, 81% of the individuals incarcerated at state prisons were sentenced for nonviolent crimes, including property offenses (28%) and drug offenses (35%). The increasing rates of imprisonment among

minority people in the United States may add considerably to racial bias in health (Bush, 2006). This is mainly due to soaring rates of infectious disease and mental illness in the United State's prison and jail population.

Gottschalk (2006), Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, says that today in the United States, 50% of all incarcerated individuals are black and 17% are Hispanic. This ratio of Blacks and Hispanics is disproportioned to the actual numbers of Blacks and Hispanics within the general population. These statistics for minority incarcerations are in stark contrast to statistics from earlier years.

Golembeski and Fullilove (2005) state that prior to 1954, 21% of those incarcerated in prisons were black, by 1954 the black prison population had increased by 30%, and by 1988, blacks comprised half of all prison incarcerations.

Golembeski and Fullilove (2005) also found that in 2003, of the males between ages 25 to 29 who were incarcerated, 1 in 8 (12.8%) were black, 1 in 27 (3.7%) were Hispanic, and 1 in 63 (1.6%) were white. Golembeski and Fullilove think that this issue of race will continue to increase and result in far more blacks being incarcerated than whites and other races of people. They say that the increased incarceration of Blacks is linked to higher crime levels in impoverished neighborhoods. According to Reiman (1998), William Fraser Professor at American University, "We know that poverty, slums, and unemployment are sources of street crime. We do not fully understand how they cause crime" (p. 28).

Reiman (1998) contends that there are many fallacies and faults in the criminal justice system that target poor people. He states that people outside of these poor communities make negative assumptions resulting in stereotypical and unfounded

conclusions that poor minorities commit more crimes than affluent whites. Reiman argues that the underlying basis for these assumptions is rooted in social inequality stigmas and these stigmas are applied to those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder even when no crimes have been reported.

Positive opportunities, including good schools and better-paid employment could aid disadvantaged people in acquiring higher socio-economic attainment (Reiman, 1998). Although, Reiman acknowledges that negative factors exist, such as lack of gun control and scarcity of pertinent intervention strategies in depressed areas, he states that assisting impoverished neighborhoods with opportunities, intervention strategies, and better laws would reduce crime and aid in elevating their socio-economic status (SES). Reiman argues that these strategies will do much in lessening inequities by reducing the causes associated with disproportionately incarcerating lower SES people. According to a report issued by the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated (2002), in 1997, most male offenders had limited education and poor employment skills. At the time of their arrest, 90% had an annual income below \$25,000 and 69% had an income below the poverty line.

The Prison Population

As noted previously, there were over 7 million individuals in jail, in prison, or on parole in 2005 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). The federal and state prisons housed 2,186,230 inmates at the end of 2005: 1,255,514 in state prisons and 175,954 in federal prisons. The local jails housed 747,529 individuals serving a sentence or awaiting trial by midyear 2005. An added 71,905 individuals that were under jail supervision were completing their sentences in the communities. There was an enormous spike in the

number of incarcerations from the 1980s to the 1990s; the imprisonment rate has since increased at a much reduced rate (U.S. Department of Justice).

Between year-end 1995 and year-end 2005, the number of imprisoned individuals increased at an average of 3.3% yearly. During 2005, the prison population increase was less in state prisons (increased by 1.3%) than in federal prisons (increased by 5.1%) and local jails (increased by 4.7%). The U.S. Department of Justice (2006) states that at least 95% of all state inmates will be released from prison at some point, and 80% of the 95% will be released to parole guidance. In 2004, 1 of every 138 U.S. residents was incarcerated in jail or prison. More than 6.9 million individuals are presently on probation or parole, or incarcerated, which represents a growth of over 275% since 1980 (Golembeski & Fullilove, 2005).

The Reentry of Ex-offenders

Bushway (2003) states that many ex-offenders reenter open society as poorly educated people who are without a history of employment and essential vocational skills. Many of these ex-offenders are, or were faced with physical disabilities, mental disabilities, or drug and alcohol addiction. Golembeski and Fullilove (2005) state, “In 1996, 1.3 million inmates who were released from prison had hepatitis C, 155,000 had hepatitis B, 98,000 had HIV, and 39,000 had AIDS, and 12,000 had tuberculosis” (p. 1). Ideally in an effort to assist ex-offenders returning to communities, the correctional facilities should have provided intensive services including necessary treatments to improve health, intervention, and rehabilitation during the offender’s incarceration period (Bushway).

According to Gottschalk (2005), the negative implications of eliminating essential services will escalate over time into serious consequences. She argues that a loss of these services will have a tremendously negative impact on the degree of success achieved by ex-offenders reentering communities. Gottschalk posits that, although some policy makers contend that these are only short-term solutions, she asserts that there will be long-term consequences if the services are eliminated, including the likelihood of increases in recidivism.

Legislation

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) (2007) revised an existing program and wrote it into a bill called The Second Chance Act of 2007, which authorizes nonprofit organizations to establish and operate programs related to reentry for ex-offenders. These organizations can provide essential mentoring and transitional services to adult and juvenile offenders. The President signed the bill on April 9, 2008. Reentry, according to the DOJ's definition involves the use of programs targeted at promoting the effective reintegration of offenders back into communities. Reentry programming, which often uses a comprehensive case management approach, is intended to assist offenders in acquiring the skills needed to succeed in the community and become law-abiding citizens. The Second Chance Act also includes provisions for prerelease programs, drug rehabilitation, vocational training, and work programs.

Henderson (2005) states that successful ex-offender reintegration accomplishes two separate public policy goals: (a) promotion of public safety and (b) self-realization of the individual as a productive citizen. She argues that difficulties surrounding effective reentry strategies raise community concerns. The most pressing concerns are related to

recidivism, joblessness, mental illness, and substance abuse among those returning into communities. The current reentry scholarship focuses almost exclusively on public safety issues. As a result, little attention has been paid to strategies designed to foster the self-realization component of successful reintegration strategies.

Henderson (2005) quotes former President Bush as saying, “America is the land of second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life” (p.1269). Henderson argues that the civil, political, and economic disabilities that result from criminal convictions are invisible punishments. Moreover, these consequences, or invisible punishments are built into state and federal laws. Henderson also asserts that these consequences lead to restrictions and prohibitions on many rights and privileges, including infringement or abrogation of the right to vote and potential public registration as a sex offender. Other restrictions are prohibitions on the right to possess firearms, exclusion from certain professions and exclusion from access to public housing. Henderson concludes that the facts relating to current federal and state laws do not support second chances for a better life for marginalized ex-offenders in America. Henderson draws a connection between social engagement and recidivism. She argues that individual fulfillment, which ultimately contributes to public safety should be the primary concern of policymakers.

Yet, several laws have been passed that can make the reintegration of ex-offenders more challenging. Geigert (2006), a J.D. Candidate in the School of Law at University of California, Berkeley, states that the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 directly affected the process of restricting ex-offenders. This law was enacted to prohibit felons with drug convictions from receiving

cash assistance from certain programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Food Stamps. Moreover, he notes that the 1992 Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriation Act requires states to restrict or deny ex-offenders the right to obtain driver licenses. This law forces states to suspend for at least six months the driver's license of any person convicted of a drug offense (Geigert). In addition, there was a law enacted by Congress in 1998 prohibiting ex-offenders from receiving federally subsidized loans if they had three or more drug convictions prior to applying for financial aid (Thompson, 2007). This law also prohibited giving work-study funds and federal grants to any student convicted of a drug offense. The law stipulated that these restrictions apply even if the individual was not charged with a misdemeanor or felony (Thompson). These restrictions barred many ex-offenders from seeking funds to attend colleges and universities.

There have been several bills introduced to address the disparity in sentencing that affects a majority of prisoners. The New School for Social Research (2006) held a forum that included Princeton sociologist Bruce Western and Judge Nancy Gartner, who specifically discussed The Anti-Drug Abuse Act passed in 1986. This legislation created the 100-1 crack to powder cocaine ratio resulting in a great disparity in sentencing guidelines. According to an article in *The Sentencing Project* (n. d.), if an individual was convicted of possession with the intent to distribute 500 grams or more of powder cocaine, the sentence carried a penalty of 5 years. Yet, an individual convicted of possession with the intent to distribute only 5 grams of crack cocaine will receive the same sentencing penalty of 5 years.

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act caused racial disparity in the sentencing population. Although roughly two-thirds of the crack cocaine users are white or Hispanic, the majority of individuals that were sentenced under this new law were blacks (*Sentencing Project*). The racial percentage of persons convicted of crack cocaine possession in 1994 was 84.5 % black, 10.3 % white, and 5.2 % Hispanic. Individuals convicted of powder cocaine possession in 1994 were 26.7 % white, 26.7 % black, and 15 % Hispanic.

Congress received a bill in 2005, the Crack-Cocaine Equitable Sentencing Act that aimed to amend the drug quantity ratio and eradicate the compulsory sentencing minimum for small possession. According to Talvi (2007), another bill was submitted in 2006 to the U.S. Senate, called the Drug Sentencing Reform Act that would reduce the drug ratio to 20 to 1 and decrease mandatory sentencing for small possessions to one year (Talvi, 2007). These bills were not passed and The Anti-Drug Abuse Act is still law.

Barriers Ex-offenders Face

According to Golembeski and Fullilove (2005), prisoners in U.S. penal institutions face many issues while being incarcerated. For example, U.S. correctional facilities increasingly house prisoners having mental disorders; it is estimated that 1 in 6 inmates have a mental illness. The occurrence of major mental illnesses, such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, posttraumatic stress disorder, and major depression is 2 to 4 times higher among inmates than among people in the general population. Golembeski and Fullilove also assert that infectious disease is 4 to 10 times higher among prisoners than the U.S. general population.

Gottschalk (2006) states that there are increasing costs and economic burdens associated with mass incarcerations, yet the funding appropriations for prisons have been

declining. She contends that this has had a major impact on penal systems that currently hold over 2 million inmates. In 2001, Illinois cut 5.4 million dollars allocated in the state budget for higher education in prisons. Gottschalk explains that the re-categorization of some programs (e.g., educational, substance abuse, and vocational), as nonessential is detrimental to the inmates. She argues that inmates not receiving these services will not acquire critical skills needed to be successful when they are released. She further states that inmates are already adversely affected by, The Violent Crime Control and Enforcement Act of 1994, which disallows providing federal Pell Grant money for prisoners.

Batiuk, Lahm, Mckeever, Wilcox, and Wilcox (2005), in a *Criminology and Criminal Justice Report*, also say that fewer funds for states and reduction in penal budgets have resulted in the elimination of education for prisoners. Prison systems are no longer able to offer programs to enhance job skills for inmates or treat inmates with substance abuse problems during incarceration. Due to the reductions in penal institution budgets, inmates are not receiving the education and training needed to assist this population with skills that will enhance their chances of receiving employment once they return home, thus problems arise for those communities receiving large numbers of ex-offenders.

According to Solomon, Johnson, Travis and McBride (2004), the reentry from prisons back into communities has always been problematic. However, what has changed is the rising trend of ex-offenders returning to prison; it is four times faster than 25 years ago (Solomon et al.). These researchers note that the more time prisoners spend in prison, the greater the barriers they face upon release. Solomon et al. assert that this is

especially true if there is little or no access to available education and training programs to aid in the transition upon release from prison. Significant numbers of ex-offenders reenter into small clusters of communities already burdened with high poverty and unemployment rates. The communities also do not have job opportunities, and the probability of being exposed to gang and crime activity is high. These unfavorable conditions largely contribute to prison recidivism. It is important for the ex-offenders released from incarceration to reestablish themselves in their neighborhoods, but the receiving communities are ill prepared to foster a positive reentry (Solomon et al.).

The Urban Institute of Justice Policy Center (2006b) has investigated problems of employment and prisoner reentry by organizing discussions through a Reentry Roundtable. The discussions are based on a research project that was conducted in four states (Illinois, Maryland, Texas, and Ohio) call *Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*. This study was used to elicit an evaluation related to the Opportunity to Succeed (OPTS) program and the impact of these programs on ex-offenders and employment (Urban Institute of Justice Policy Center).

The Urban Institute of Justice Policy Center (2006b) selected five areas for discussion at the Roundtable: individual person, family, cohort, community, and state. The focus was on examining policies, practices, problems, and incentives needed to transition ex-offenders to legitimate, marketable employment. This information was used to explore pre-release expectations and post-release work experiences of prisoners in Illinois, Maryland, Texas, and Ohio. The purpose of the research was to assess the importance of employment and relevant services needed by ex-offenders for successful reentry into communities.

According to Uggen, Wakfield, Travis, and Visser (2005), ex-offenders face many barriers upon reentering the free society, such as housing, education, health, work experience, and recidivism. Each of these areas will be individually examined.

Housing

According to Open Society Institute (2009), there are many barriers ex-offenders face even before they attempt to enter the workforce. Acquiring housing is perhaps the most immediate challenge facing prisoners upon their release. While many ex-offenders have plans to stay with family, those who do not are confronted by limited housing options. The process of obtaining housing is often complicated by a host of factors: the scarcity of affordable and available housing, legal barriers and regulations, and prejudices that restrict tenancy for this marginalized population. Other restrictions also present barriers for ex-offenders, such as the strict eligibility requirements for federally subsidized housing (Open Society Institute). This population is not excluded from receiving federally subsidized housing, but the rigorous application process and the long waiting lists leave ex-offenders without immediate housing opportunities.

According to a report by the Delaware Reentry Roundtable (2007), ex-offenders may also encounter conditions of probation or parole that can be a further hindrance. The requirements or conditions of probation may prohibit an ex-offender from living within a certain distance of schools and churches, or from taking up residence in a home with minor children. This exclusion may result in restricting ex-offenders from residing in entire communities due to their criminal offenses.

Other options might exist for temporary housing, such as shelters, but these temporary housing solutions may also have severe restrictions (Delaware Reentry

Roundtable, 2007). These restrictions are often attributed to the shelter's guidelines regarding the population that the shelter serves (males or females) and the nature of the offense. The need for transitional or transition supportive services is crucial in creating opportunities for ex-offenders to stabilize their lives. These shelters offer additional services such as assistance in obtaining employment and information on how to seek benefits that the ex-offender might need for a smoother transition back into society. However, there are not enough of these centers due to limited funding (Delaware Reentry Roundtable).

Education

According to Batiuk et al. (2005), the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 contains a provision that denies the allocation of federal Pell Grant dollars to inmates. Although the bill does not deny college programming to inmates, few prisoners have the financial resources to pay for college classes while in prison; therefore, many colleges and universities have had to close down their prison programs altogether. Ex-offenders unable to participate in programs while incarcerated cannot address their need for education and training.

McKean and Ransford (2004), of the Center for Impact Research, state that education has a direct connection to employment and recidivism. They note that most ex-offenders are released with low educational achievement and lack the basic skills necessary for the labor market. Although, McKean and Ransford acknowledge that prior to release some inmates are able to receive vocational training, they argue that sanctions applied to some inmates restrict participation in these vocational programs to a small number of those incarcerated. McKean and Ransford also note that, in 1997, state and

federal prisons reported close to 41% of inmates did not complete high school, and 31% in local jails had not completed high school or received a GED, in comparison to 18% of the general population. Freeman (2003), of Harvard University, also states that inmates often have not received a high school diploma or GED, are considered skill deficient, and generally score low on standardized tests. Moreover, Freeman argues that when the inmates are released without education and skills, the likelihood of recidivism is higher than if they were offered training while incarcerated.

Health

The study conducted by the Urban Institute of Justice Policy Center (2005) in Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, and Texas found that health is a chronic problem for ex-offenders. The research showed that ex-offenders might have multiple health issues upon release from prison, including AIDS, HIV, Hepatitis B/C, Tuberculosis, Sexually Transmitted Disease, Asthma, High Blood Pressure, Diabetes, Arthritis, Mental Health, Depression, Substance Abuse, and Alcoholism. The Center's study focused on ex-offenders illnesses that require ongoing medication, access to health care practitioners, and health care facilities. Locating agencies that will assist in providing needed health services is a major priority for this marginalized ex-offender population.

Work Experience

According to Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll (2003b), another challenging issue ex-offenders struggle to overcome in their pursuit of reentry is employment. Most ex-offenders lack the necessary skills and services needed to acquire sustainable employment. Employment rates and earnings of ex-offenders were fairly low even before incarceration.

Holzer, et al. (2003a) discuss the existence of some factors that limit employment and earnings among ex-offenders. They separate these factors into two categories: (a) those that operate on the supply side of the labor market through the attitudes, characteristics and behaviors of the ex-offenders and (b) those that operate on the demand side through the attitudes and behaviors of employers, and the characteristics of jobs ex-offenders seek to fill. Supply-side barriers arise when ex-offenders have a variety of characteristics that greatly limit their employability and earning capacity, including limited skills, education and cognitive training, and work experience, as well as inappropriate attitudes or behaviors.

However, as noted by Holzer et al. (2003a), relatively low employment and earnings reported for ex-offenders might reflect their own weak labor market characteristics and behaviors, rather than the effects of incarceration. Thus, Holzer et al. compared the post-incarceration employment and earnings of ex-offenders with their employment and earnings prior to incarceration. The finding shows that earnings are reduced by a period of incarceration from 10-30%.

Holzer et al. (2003a) also argue that skill and health-related problems primarily affect ex-offenders who are minorities. Nearly half of the ex-offender population is African-American and almost a fifth is Latino or Asian. Holzer et al. state, ex-offenders return to low-income and predominantly minority communities that have relatively few unskilled jobs. Ex-offenders also return to groups that can provide relatively few contacts to the world of legitimate work. Moreover, Holzer et al. assert that the communities the ex-offenders reenter are often detrimental because essential services are not available for those returning from prison. These negative factors are further

compounded by laws that prohibit ex-offenders in some states from obtaining a driver's license, which creates major obstacles for this marginalized group.

Thus, ex-offenders face barriers that are either beyond their control or are related to poor attitudes and choices made by them in the past. Nevertheless, the results are limited employment prospects. Holzer et al. (2003a) think it is likely that a large number of these ex-offenders, who are mostly men, might be able to find some kind of work if they search long enough. However, the jobs will pay low wages and provide few benefits or opportunities for upward mobility; therefore, ex-offenders are permanently marginalized into a lower socio-economic status. Holzer et al. maintain that in these circumstances, many ex-offenders may simply choose to forego poor employment options in favor of illegal activities or more casual work.

Other factors, such as race, gender, and geographic locations of potential job applicants also affect employer tendencies related to hiring and or retaining workers (Holzer et.al, 2003). According to Fahey, Roberts, and Engel (2006), there are two kinds of barriers generated by employers: those related to general personal characteristics of ex-offenders and those explicitly related to their ex-offender status. Fahey et al. propose that other barriers arise when employers obtain criminal records of ex-offenders. Across the country, states have provided employers with varying degrees of access to the criminal record information on prospective and current employees. Although, Aukerman (2003) recognizes the need for employers to protect other employees, she contends that providing access to criminal records makes it more difficult for ex-offenders to obtain employment. However, many employers argue that they should know who their

employees are and whether they pose an unnecessary risk to the workplace. In more than half the states, access to criminal record information via the Internet is very broad.

According to Pager (2006), an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Princeton University, the connection between work and crime is multifaceted. Research has shown a relationship between an individual's status in the workforce and his or her likelihood of returning to prison (Pager). According to Bushway and Reuter (2002), there is a clear relationship between the two facets of ex-offenders obtaining employment and acquiring increased wages and neighborhood crimes rates reducing because motivations for criminal activities are equalized by gainful employment. Pager (as cited in Pager 2006) states, "We know that ex-offenders face bleak prospects in the labor market, with the mark of a criminal record representing an important barrier to finding work" (p.1).

Pager (2006) states that while it is important for ex-offenders to find employment, employers find themselves in a vulnerable situation causing them to be reluctant to hire ex-offenders. Employers often fear that the ex-offenders may return to illegal or dangerous behavior, and Pager asserts that employers have the responsibility to protect all employees. Pager says that employers want to minimize any legal litigation that may occur as a result of knowingly hiring an employee who may have a tendency to harm another employee. Moreover, employers are responsible for hiring dependable employees who will report to work on time and minimize absenteeism.

The difficulties that ex-offenders face when attempting to reintegrate, especially as a result of consequences that limit economic opportunities, frustrate the efforts of ex-offenders who want to live crime-free (Henderson, 2005). Crime free life can be achieved, according to Henderson, only if adequate employment opportunities are

available for ex-offenders upon release from incarceration. If ex-offenders experience an inability to secure employment, and exclusion from state and federal welfare programs, desperation may drive many of them to engage in illegitimate money-earning enterprises prevalent in their communities. These pressures and the need to financially support them may significantly outweigh other considerations, including the risk of being caught and returned to prison.

Recidivism

According to the Urban Institute Justice Policy Center (2006a), criminal justice research shows that individuals released from incarceration often continue their association with the criminal justice system. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2002) compared two recidivism research studies conducted on inmates released in 1983 and in 1994. These studies found that almost two-thirds of ex-offenders released (62.5% for the 1983 cohort and 67.5 % for the 1994 cohort) were rearrested within three years after their release. Batiuk et al. (2005) state that recidivism produces large economic expenses within the criminal justice system, human costs in terms of victimization, and costs with respect to public support. These factors have resulted in a growing public sentiment that the criminal justice system does not work to control crime.

Batiuk et al. (2005) state, an effective technique for reducing recidivism is vocational education. They assert that vocational education offers at least three benefits: (a) it provides the inmates with skills that increase their potential for employment upon returning home, (b) it lessens idleness while incarcerated, and (c) it can decrease correctional costs through partnerships with private industry.

Solomon et al. (2004) argue that it is imperative for solutions to be found and for federal, state, and local legislators to enact laws that will aid in the reduction of recidivism. They say this is crucial to the desired outcome of developing productive members of society that contribute to the safety and morale of all citizens. When this occurs, the benefits are many, including saving resources, strengthening family and community ties, and expanding the labor force and economy.

An executive summary submitted to the Illinois Department of Correction by Jennifer D. Smith, with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, in 2006, argues that post-secondary educational programs help the prisoner and the state. According to Smith, studies have revealed that post-secondary educational programs can decrease the recidivism rate by up to one-third. In Illinois, this would mean that taxpayers could save \$3 in future prison costs, for every \$1 spent on educating an inmate. Smith asserts that Illinois once had a vibrant and strong correctional education system; however, it has been weakened by increases in the prison population and budget cuts over the years. Thus, the quality and quantity of post-secondary education offered at Illinois correction facilities have been adversely affected.

Robert Lee Rhodes (2009), a doctoral candidate at New Mexico State University, conducted a study that examined the impact of post-secondary education on reducing recidivism in the New Mexico Department of Corrections system. The researcher did a quantitative study with six level minimum security facilities and the women's facility in Grants, New Mexico. The study included 522 prisoners out of roughly 700 inmates who were eligible to participate in post-secondary education courses. Approximately 3400 inmates were not eligible to participate in the education courses. An SPSS Statistical

Package was used to analyze offender recidivism data and the offender records. Rhodes found a statistically significant correlation between participation in post-secondary correctional education programs and the rate of recidivism.

Educational Support Services

In this section, educational support services including life skill training and mentoring are discussed. It is argued that educational support services are important to the success of marginalized lower socio-economic status ex-offenders and their quest to reenter the lives of their families, their communities, and the labor market.

Life Skills

According to Fahey et al. (2006), life skills are required to navigate through many systems; for example family, neighborhoods within communities, and the job market. These skills include acquiring knowledge to help in the development of healthy attitudes (Fahey et al.). The North Lawndale Employment Network (2009), a community based organization in Illinois, issued a publication describing life skills as being skills needed to enhance an individual's quality of life. According to the North Lawndale Employment Network, time management is one of the most important soft skills for ex-offenders to possess when seeking to enter the job market. Other soft skills listed in this report that require immediate attention by ex-offenders include learning how to deal with emotions, coping with stress, overcoming a poor self-concept, and revising negative beliefs for a positive outcome. Rakis (2005), President of John Rakis and Associates, who is an consultant to government and nonprofit agencies on correction's transition and offender workforce development, adds that ex-offenders need to learn how to bridge relationships, and review and deal with past decisions. After addressing past decisions, ex-offenders

would be free to forge ahead with making future decisions, as well as learning to understand and discuss how decisions impact their lives. The North Lawndale report further asserts that ex-offenders will benefit by learning to use socially acceptable language expressions. It is imperative that ex-offenders have attitudes that will allow them to interact in a socially acceptable way with others, think critically about situations before they act or react, and develop the ability to resolve conflicts in a rational manner (North Lawndale Employment Network; Rakis; Visher & Travis, 2003).

The Delaware Center for Justice (2007) suggests that there is an atmosphere of negative prison influence for those who are incarcerated. Inmates tend to think they must have a certain persona that permeates prison culture, including a mind-set that they do not need education to make it in prison or on the street, and they must be hostile and uncommunicative. However, these prison cultural norms are especially destructive to an ex-offender's successful reintegration into the general population of society. Ex-offenders need to learn how to follow instructions as given and act independently when appropriate or necessary (Delaware Center for Justice; Visher & Travis, 2003). Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle, and Hardcastle (2004), in a Criminology Research Council report, state that having work skills is paramount to ex-offenders entering the workforce, but employers also emphasize that soft skills are crucial. Life skills are important to all students and especially for this marginalized population of ex-offenders. These skills include resume writing, interviewing, job retention, positive decision making, coming to work every day, arriving on time, and wearing suitable work attire (Graffam et al., 2004; U.S. Department of Labor, 2007; Rakis, 2005; Fahey et al., 2006).

Mentoring

Raki (2005) asserts that guidance and support are important elements of ex-offender success in the labor market. The mentor provides assessment, develops a plan of action, and serves as an intermediary between the employer and employee in an attempt to assist ex-offenders in creating a smooth transition into the workforce (Rakis). Mentors provide moral support and follow-up on issues and concerns of the employers and the ex-offenders, thus creating a network support system for employment retention, which is essential to the success of ex-offenders (Fahey et al., 2006; Rakis; U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).

Labor Market

This section examines the labor market, availability of employment, and criteria for ex-offenders entering the labor market. According to Holzer et al. (2003b), employers are more reluctant to hire ex-offenders than any other prospective employee in the lower socio-economic status group. They also note that certain types of industries and positions are heavily influenced by criminal history; for example, employers declined to hire ex-offenders with a history of embezzlement in any job involving financial services. Holzer et al. also state that employers will not hire someone convicted of drug abuse in any health services on the oft chance they would come into contact with medications.

Holzer et al. (2003b) say that several industries are amenable to hiring ex-offenders when there is little contact with its customers in manufacturing, transportation, unskilled labor positions and construction. However, prohibitions against hiring ex-offenders for public employment in certain jobs involving contact with children, security services, and health services further reduce opportunities for ex-offenders to enter the

labor market. Moreover, this marginalized population is facing increased competition in a tight labor market where skilled workers are in the best position to compete. Yet, according to the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (2003), the labor markets consisting of the lowest paying jobs are available for disadvantaged marginalized ex-offenders. The ex-offenders usually have lower skills and are only able to obtain unskilled jobs that include shift work, day labor, retail, food services, and waiters or waitresses. These jobs require little training and pay minimum wages for the disadvantaged low-income populations of ex-offenders.

According to Halimah Abdullah (2009) of the McClatchy Newspapers, in the current recession, the labor market has presented a challenge for disadvantaged individuals, such as, ex-offenders, elder workers, and uneducated people seeking employment. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009) reported that during this severe recession, unemployment was at 9.4 % in May 2009. Due to the exceptionally high unemployment rate, a multitude of middle managers with MBAs and recent college graduates are all competing for the same jobs that ex-offenders and other disadvantaged individuals normally seek, such as restaurant greeters or baristas (Abdullah). Although the recession has generated additional challenges for ex-offenders and other populations at-risk in the labor market, now would be a good opportunity to focus on techniques needed to educate and train this population of at-risk individuals to take advantage of the new jobs that will come available as a result of the impending energy and other priority industries (Lerman, 2008).

Community Colleges: Provider and Partner

Community Colleges are important to individuals as well as to families because they help to provide the education, skills, and training that are needed to improve employment opportunities and access further education. This is especially true for the impoverished groups of ex-offenders who are reentering communities and striving to enter the labor force.

The role of community colleges is particularly important for helping ex-offenders to improve their lives. These institutions have always been at the forefront of providing education, skills, and training for diverse populations with myriad needs (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Community colleges are conveniently located in communities where ex-offenders reside and these colleges have a mission of being accessible and serving their community. The colleges provide open access and offer a relatively low cost education that yields high quality instruction in a large array of vocational and academic programs. Community colleges provide other important services as well, such as linkages to other colleges, trade affiliations, and partnerships with community based organizations (Jenkins & Fitzgerald, 1998). Moreover, these institutions offer flexibility in scheduling, which is essential in today's busy society.

Community colleges are available for anyone who desires to enroll in single courses, certificate programs, associate's degree programs or transfer programs to four-year colleges. Ex-offenders are in the community that the college serves and also among their student body. The college can best serve them and society by considering how to strengthen the workforce training programs and incorporating the needs of this and other marginalized populations. According to Fahey et al. (2006), community colleges can

assist ex-offenders by providing some of the essential soft or life skills, thus helping them to develop healthy attitudes (dealing with emotions, coping with stress, overcoming a poor self-concept, and eliminating negative beliefs), time management skills, decision making skills, and critical thinking skills to work in the labor force. Graffam et al. (2004) suggest providing ex-offenders with resume writing skills, interviewing skills, and job search strategies.

Jenkins and Fitzgerald (1998) state that community colleges have a responsibility to provide technical training and up to date equipment. This is necessary in an increasingly technological environment for disadvantaged students, which includes the ex-offenders enrolling in its programs. Research conducted by Jenkins and Fitzgerald further suggests that community colleges should develop partnerships with service agencies; community based organizations, and trades affiliations, as well as linkages to employers.

Jenkins and Fitzgerald (1998) maintain that disadvantaged students will benefit greatly if training is a combination of classroom instruction and applicable on-the-job training. This training would strengthen the learning outcomes by showing the connection and relevance of the program content to the work environment for this group that previously had little or no work exposure in the labor market. Jenkins and Fitzgerald also assert that disadvantaged students need much guidance, support, and continued monitoring if they are to be successful. Moreover, it is imperative that special emphasis be placed on creating and maintaining support systems for disadvantage marginalized groups of students, such as ex-offenders, in order to alleviate problems or potential

obstacles that could prevent their successful entry into the labor market (Bryant, 2001; Holzer et al. 2003b; Fahey et al. 2006; Jenkins & Fitzgerald, 1998; Roberts, 2002).

A report issued by a Mayor's Office in 2005 [reference withheld to preserve the confidentiality of the case study institution] announced a program to assist ex-offenders in gaining experience in an auto mechanic program through a Community College Partnership, Community Based Organizations, Ford Motor Company, Daimier -Chrysler, Lincoln- Mercury and Ford Dealers Associations, Pastor's Network, and Juvenile Court. This program enables community colleges to provide training, support services, and life skills training. It also allows ex-offenders to earn money while gaining necessary skills and experience repairing light duty city government vehicles. The Mayor initiated this program to work in conjunction with community colleges and other partnerships in his efforts to decrease crime. He expressed his opinion that providing ex-offenders with a legitimate means of earning money will help to lower the crime rate. This program was designed with the hope of giving ex-offenders crucial opportunities for future employment. Upon completion of the entire program, the ex-offender has 40% of the skills needed for master mechanic status. Programs like this one would greatly enhance the capabilities of community colleges to assist their ex-offender students in preparing to enter and be retained in the workforce

Summary

In summary, the primary barriers ex-offenders face upon entering free society are housing, education, health, work experience, and recidivism. Housing is one of the main challenges for ex-offenders returning home from incarceration. If this population cannot live with family, there are limited housing resources available. Education is a barrier for

ex-offenders because many are released without the educational and vocational skills needed to enter the workforce. Health is also a problem for ex-offenders because of the many health issues they have upon entering the free society. Poor health presents a problem for them in gaining and sustaining employment. Moreover, ex-offenders struggle with entering the workforce after incarceration because they have had limited work experience before they went to prison. Also, employers are reluctant to hire individuals with a criminal background. Finally, recidivism is a barrier for ex-offenders because two-thirds of these individuals return to incarceration within three years of their release. Recidivism is a consequence of ex-offenders not being able to overcome the barriers of housing, education, poor health, and lack of preparation for, or acceptance in the labor market.

This research study adds to the literature by further exploring barriers male ex-offenders face upon entering free society and in their pursuit of employment. It also addresses a void in the literature by exploring the types of support services that community colleges could provide for this marginalized population. The search of literature did not identify any research studies specifically analyzing the needs of ex-offenders studying at community colleges and ways in which the colleges can assist ex-offenders to gain access into the workforce.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the qualitative methodology and case study approach used to carry out the study are explained. This chapter also describes the data collection methods, data analysis procedures, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations. Yet, the best place to begin is with a review of the study's purpose and its research questions.

Purpose of the Study

This research study has a two-part purpose: (a) to explore barriers that male ex-offenders encounter in their pursuit of entering the workforce, and (b) to explore various types of education and support services that community colleges could provide in order to assist this marginalized population in overcoming these barriers, and accomplishing entry into the workforce.

Five research questions guided the study:

1. How do correctional institutions prepare male inmates for entry into the workforce?
2. What types of programs are offered by the case study institution to assist male ex-offender students with entry into the workforce?
3. What types of barriers do male ex-offenders face in seeking employment?
4. How can the case study institution help ex-offender students overcome the barriers, thus facilitating entry into the workforce?
5. How can the case study institution obtain greater acceptance from employers for these graduating students who are marginalized ex-offenders?

Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study design. Qualitative research is a methodology of “social science research that emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural settings, uses inductive thinking, and emphasizes understanding the subjects point of view” (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007, p. 274). Qualitative studies involve interpretation, contextualization, and understanding of the storyteller’s perspectives (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In this study, a qualitative methodology was selected because it enabled the researcher to elicit and understand in detail the barriers that male ex-offenders face when attempting to enter the workforce. Moreover, throughout the study this researcher examined different perspectives concerning various types of educational and support services that a community college could provide to assist the marginalized ex-offender population to overcome barriers that prevent them from gaining employment. Case study was selected as the best method for addressing the research questions and accessing the views of male ex-offenders who could then tell their stories in their natural setting at the Community College Case Study Institution (CCCSI), where they are trained and educated for entry into the workforce.

Qualitative Research

In this study the researcher employed a qualitative research methodology to capture the essence of the barriers ex-offenders encounter while pursuing employment after being released from incarceration, and to discover how community colleges can assist this population of students. This methodology allowed the researcher to interact with male ex-offenders at the institution they are currently attending, or previously attended, CCCSI, in the Construction Technology programs. The study examined the

phenomenon of barriers to ex-offenders' entry into the work force and the pathway CCCSI is using to assist male ex-offenders in gaining access to employment. The researcher describes the ex-offenders' views of their experiences and their perceptions of what is needed for community colleges to assist them in moving along their pathway into the workforce.

Merriam and Simpson (2000), argue that qualitative research is particularly suitable for investigating adult training and education because these areas require constant improvement and expansion of practice to meet the needs of adult students. In this study, the enhancement and significance of practice are investigated and cultivated through the conceptualizations of the CCCSI professionals and potential employers. Consequently, there are many "realities" of importance to the research that can be captured using a qualitative methodology. Merriam and Simpson (2000) state qualitative research is accomplished in conceptualization of how people understand their lives, to describe the process (rather than the outcome or product), and to reveal how people interpret what they experience. Each ex-offender's perspectives of the obstacles and experiences, as well as the support provided by CCCSI, and the perspectives of CCCSI professionals along with those of prospective employers, contributed to a holistic understanding of the phenomenon and the CCCSI pathway.

Case Study Approach

According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), case study is a rigorous depiction and analysis of an individual social unit that seeks to unearth the relationship of important aspects that characterize that element. Merriam (1998) states, "a qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social

unit” (p. 27). She also asserts that a case study is a bounded system that is a thing, a single entity, or a unit around which there are boundaries. A qualitative approach to case study research is characterized by investigation of a bounded system (a case), over a period of time, through in-depth data gathering techniques entailing the triangulation of data, and reports a case based description and themes (Creswell, 2007). Thus a qualitative case study design was selected for this research, which uses a bounded case (the community college) to examine a social phenomenon (barriers facing ex-offenders as they try to enter the work force), and seeks to discover how community colleges can help these students through programs and services to overcome the barriers (addressing the phenomenon).

Robert Yin (2003) states that a case study is used in numerous situations to provide knowledge regarding an individual, organizational, group, political, or social phenomenon. Moreover, Willis (2007) says that case study is one of the well-accepted and commonly used approaches within qualitative research. Case studies have five characteristic; they are particularistic, naturalistic, thickly descriptive, inductive, and heuristic. By particularistic, Willis means the case study focuses on a specific entity, such as an individual, family, classroom, or office. In this study, the particularistic elements are ex-offenders and the case study community college’s programs and support services that are aimed at assisting the ex-offenders gain access into the workforce.

Case studies are naturalistic because they are about real people and circumstances, and much of the data collection takes place in real situations (Willis, 2007). CCCSI provided the physical habitation where ex-offenders are currently, or were previously enrolled at the institution. The ex-offender participants in this study have had real life

experience with the phenomenon that is the focus of the research and as students in the CCCSI context.

Rich thick description, as explained by Willis (2007), includes participant interviews, observations, writings such as journals and diaries, and historical and narrative sources. For this study, the methods used to collect data included interviews, document review, questionnaires, observations, and field notes. The ex-offenders experiences and community college pathways have been described in detail thus enabling the reader to have a vicarious experience through the descriptive process.

Regarding the inductive characteristic of qualitative research, Creswell (2007) states an “inductive process involves researchers working back and forth between the themes and the data base until they establish a comprehensive set of themes” (p. 39). Merriam (1998) asserts that a qualitative researcher works towards building theory or concepts (inductive) rather than testing theory (deductive). Willis (2007) thinks that inductive study of data must rely on inductive reasoning; therefore, generalizations, hypotheses, or concepts materialize from the investigation of data. Inductive methods used in conducting data analysis for this study included multiple reviews and the coding processes for data gathered through interviews with ex-offenders, CCCSI professionals, and potential employers, as well as from observations, document reviews, and reflections recorded in the field notes.

When Willis (2007) states that a case study is heuristic, he means that it provides insight that enhances the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon of the research. Merriam (1998) similarly says that heuristic means the case study sheds light on the readers’ and researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon. The heuristic aspect of this

study is that it provides insights into the barriers faced by ex-offenders and how the community colleges can facilitate overcoming these barriers. Interviews served as a heuristic for understanding the ways that ex-offenders communicate and conceptualize their situation and how the professionals and employers view the barriers and pathway.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue that all qualitative research is interpretive; it is funneled by the researcher's array of principles and beliefs about how the world should be appreciated and researched. This qualitative case study is situated in an interpretive paradigm because it examines socially salient action through the direct, particularized interaction with ex-offenders, community colleges professionals, and prospective employers in their natural surroundings in order to arrive at an interpretation and understanding of the ex-offender's pathway into the workforce. This qualitative case study involved six male ex-offenders who were interviewed either while enrolled in a community college training program, or after the training was completed. The study also included interviews with four CCCSI professionals and two potential employers.

In summary, qualitative case study is an appropriate method for this research study, which investigates the barriers male ex-offenders encounter in their pursuit of employment and the approaches that community colleges can use to assist these students. As stated by Willis (2007), in the U.S., there is history of qualitative methods being used to study the perspectives of people barred from the main stream. This design enables a detailed examination of the phenomenon of interest from multiple perspectives.

Case and Participant Selection

Sampling Procedure for the Case

Creswell (2007) advises that once the specific purpose of the study is ascertained, it is imperative to make an expeditious decision regarding who or what should be sampled, what form the sampling will take, and how many people or sites need to be sampled. Merriam and Simpson (2000) say that when there is an “interest in the in-depth understanding of those who know the most (rather than the average opinion of the many),” it is favorable for the researcher to select a purposeful sample (p.100). Patton (as cited in Merriam & Simpson, 2000) explains that a purposeful sample “is one from which you can learn the most; it is an information-rich case” from which individuals can learn much about issues that are necessary to the purpose of the research (p. 100).

The case study institution for this research, referred to as Community College Case Study Institution (CCCSI), was selected based on purposeful sampling. From the history and current context of CCCSI, it was clear that this institution would enable the researcher to understand, analyze, and explore relevant issues and questions related to the purpose of the study.

CCCSI was originally established to provide short-term training in vocational career education and the student body mostly consisted of low income, female, African Americans seeking education and training to prepare them for entry-level jobs, such as keyboarding, business technology, nursing, and medical transcription. The community college was surrounded by one of the largest public housing units in the United States until 2004 when the city began tearing down many public housing buildings, including those surrounding CCCSI.

In 2005, CCCSI was faced with the possibility of closing its doors, until the community rallied and lobbied with other stakeholders in urging the Mayor to understand the importance of keeping CCCSI's doors open. As a result of those urgings, the Mayor restructured CCCSI and reestablished the institution as a construction technology center for the city. The Community College Case Study Institution then began offering programs in electrical overhead, carpentry, painting, and masonry. These new programs showed considerable success and resulted in significant changes to CCCSI and its student body. According to a 2007 CCCSI report, the programs attracted a different diverse population, and 50% of the student body was comprised of ex-offenders. Therefore, when conducting the sampling, CCCSI stood out as an information rich case in which to study the phenomenon and related community college programs and services.

Identifying Participants

After considering various types of purposeful sampling for selection of the research participants, the researcher determined that network and criterion sampling were suitable for this study. Network sampling involves asking each participant or group of participants to refer the researcher to other participants or cases of interest that are information-rich. Thus sampling that involves networking helps to identify good examples for study, and good interview participants. Network sampling was used to identify ex-offender and prospective employer participants. Criterion sampling also was used for the ex-offenders because they needed to meet four criteria to qualify for participation: (a) male, (b) between 20-40 years of age, (c) attended the case study institution, and (d) had been released from prison at least 90 days prior to the commencement of the study. For the CCCSI professionals who participated, two criteria

were used: (a) position (administrators and student affairs) and (b) extensive experience with the ex-offender student population.

The researcher first received permission from the CCCSI's President to conduct the research, and then the president appointed a contact person to assist the researcher in identifying participants for this study. The contact person, who worked in a lead administrator's office of a CCCSI subsidiary that assists the students in job placement, referred the researcher to two prospective employer representatives. The researcher contacted the employers via email and telephone, and they agreed to participate in the study. Two administrators and two student services staff were selected based on their position in the institution and their experience with this marginalized student population.

Also, the researcher selected six male ex-offenders participants who met the study criteria. These ex-offenders either volunteered after hearing about the study from other students who had participated, or CCCSI staff had recommended them.

Role of the Researcher

Merriam and Simpson (2000) state, "in all forms of qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (p. 98). Because understanding a human phenomenon is the purpose of this study, "the human instrument, which is able to be immediately responsive and adaptive, would seem to be the ideal instrument for collecting and analyzing data" (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 98). Moreover adaptability and responsiveness enable the primary instrument (researcher) to reflect on the entire context of the phenomenon, instead of a specific quantity. This process of reflection allows the researcher to analyze data at the time it is collected, thus

improving data collection procedures by explaining and recapitulating material, checking with the storyteller for exactness of interpretation, and examining noteworthy responses.

However, as noted by Merriam and Simpson (2000), the researcher must take into consideration limitations and biases that could affect the research. In this study, the researcher transcribed the interviews and returned them to the interviewees to ensure the essence of their interview was accurately captured in the transcription. The researcher also reflected on her thoughts and interpretations as a way of identifying and controlling any biases of her own that might affect the study's findings.

The Researcher

This researcher's past experiences in the community college system and her lifelong commitment to education and serving her community have shaped her appreciation for the importance of education and training. It is from this viewpoint that the researcher conducts research to assist in identifying essential pathways needed for ex-offenders to enter into the workforce. The researcher's life began in extremely humble circumstances, growing up in Vaiden, Mississippi as one of 13 children in a two-parent household. Her mother worked only in the winters, at a forest nursery that planted pine trees. The researcher's father was a sharecropper in the early years of her life and then by chance, switched occupations and worked in construction. Her mother completed the 10th grade and her father the 5th grade, yet they both worked very hard to make sure that their children had an opportunity to receive a good education. The researcher is now married and has four sons and one foster son.

The researcher's interest in ex-offenders and what is needed to get them into employment started at an early stage in life. While in high school, she was assigned a

research paper that had to be completed in order to graduate, and her topic was juvenile delinquents. From January to April, she had to research many aspects about juveniles and why they committed delinquent acts. This assignment sparked her interest, which continued to grow until she went on to college and majored in Criminal Justice, with a concentration in corrections.

As the researcher continued her education in criminal justice, she had an opportunity to visit Parchment Penitentiary in Mississippi on many occasions. She also did an internship at the Jackson Municipal Court in Mississippi. These opportunities were instrumental in her continued quest for knowledge that guided her in preparing to work with an at-risk population. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice, she decided to move to Illinois for better employment opportunities, as well as allowing her to further explore advanced education. In Illinois, the researcher interned with the United States Department of Regulation. Upon completion of her internship, she was employed by a community college.

This researcher's first job with community colleges entailed working in a program with individuals who received general assistance from the State of Illinois. These individuals were adults who received public aid and did not have any children, or their children were over 18 years of age. Her duties included conducting on-site orientation at the Illinois Department of Public Aid, providing academic and vocational counseling for program participants, and developing personalized learning and strategic employment plans. Later, at the same community college, she started working with male ex-offender students between the ages of 16-21. With these students, she taught General Educational

Development (GED) classes. If the students passed the GED test, they received a credential equivalent to a high school diploma.

The researcher continued her pursuit in helping this disadvantaged population by advancing her own education; she earned a Master of Science in Human Services Administration. Her thesis was on developing a male youth center and her interest in this population continued to develop. Also during this time, she accepted a new position at the community college in a program dealing with 9th -12th grade students in the Public School System. This program focused on first generation low-income students who have a desire to go into some form of post secondary education. The researcher counseled these students in career goals and post-secondary education. She also provided assessment in individual and group capacities.

Naturally, the researcher is still a work in progress and she is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Community College Leadership. This quest for lifelong learning has continued to fuel her desire to assist low income, impoverished, and marginalized members of her community and beyond. It is her burning desire to promote education and training as a means for people to escape the cycle of poverty and incarceration. This research study and ultimately obtaining a leadership position will contribute to her personal and professional goals of serving and assisting those who are impoverished, marginalized, and ex-offenders to become productive citizens.

Data Collection Methods

This section describes the data collection methods used in the study. To strengthen the research multiple sources of data were utilized, but interviews were the

primary source for gaining perspectives, descriptions of experiences and insights from the participating ex-offenders, community college personnel, and employers.

Methods

For a case study, data collection comprises an assortment of methods that enable the researcher to construct a detailed picture of the study (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (1998) suggests that there are “three data collection methods; conducting interviews, observing, and analyzing documents” (p. 134). Yin (2003), states that the methods most commonly used in case studies are interviews, reviewing archival records and documents, participant-observation, direct-observation, and physical artifacts. Any one of these methods does not have a complete advantage over the others because each has its strengths and weaknesses (Yin, 2003; Willis, 2007). Merriam makes the point that using the three methods (interviews, observations, and documents review) helps the researcher to triangulate the data, crosscheck the findings, and improve the validity of the study. Willis (2007) states that triangulation using different methods of data collection is better than only using one method because multiple methods lead to a better understanding of the phenomena being studied. In order to access a wide range of information, the researcher used five data collection methods; document review, demographic questionnaires, field notes, observations, and interviews.

Document Review

According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), documents reviewed are authentic sources of information and typically already exist within the framework of the research (e.g., mission statements, student papers, interoffice memos, and press releases). Yin (2003) says that relevant documents can take many shapes, and the use of documents has

both strengths and weaknesses. Four strengths of documents are (a) stability (can be examined continually); (b) unobtrusiveness (not formed as a consequence of the case study); (c) exactness (contain exact details of an event, names, and references); and (d) breadth of coverage (extended span of time, multiple events, and multiple settings). The four weaknesses of documents according to Yin, are (a) irretrievability (unable to retrieve a large amount); (b) bias (if the document is incomplete); (c) reporting bias (an author's undisclosed bias); and (d) access (may be intentionally blocked).

In a case study, Yin (2003) explained that the most significant use of documents is to support and enhance evidence gained through other methods. He gives three ways of using documents. First, documents are helpful in verifying the correct spelling and titles or names of organizations that might have been mentioned in an interview. Second, documents can provide other specific details to corroborate information from other sources. Third, the researcher can make inferences from documents.

In this study, the researcher reviewed documents, such as the case study institution's admission applications, student handbooks, enrollment cards, individual educational plan forms, financial aid forms, and the Compass test to examine policies and practices as they relate to assisting ex-offenders' transition into the workforce.

Documents on the Illinois Department of Correction Web site related to reentry of ex-offenders also were examined. The researcher carefully considered and made efforts to address the strengths and weaknesses of each collection method during the research. The strengths of documents were that they (a) could be examined continually during the data collection process; (b) preexisted at the start of this case study, and (c) contained exact details of the support and services provided by CCCSI. Weaknesses were (a) access

because the researcher could only obtain documents from the Assistant Dean of Student Services and the Internet, and (b) incompleteness because some of the programs were in the planning stage.

Demographic Questionnaire

Merriam and Simpson (2000) state that written or oral surveys are data-gathering methods often used by researchers. The word survey reveals an extensive category of methods that employ questioning as an approach to extract information (Merriam & Simpson). They explain that “written forms of surveys are referred to as questionnaires; surveys conducted orally are interviews” (p. 146). Although questionnaires and surveys serve related purposes in acquiring information, each presents unique advantages for the study (Merriam & Simpson).

According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), there are two types of questionnaires, the open questionnaire and the closed (or forced-choice) questionnaire. The open questionnaire has entries that permit more freedom of reply, while closed questionnaires require that the person to select one of the alternatives given. The closed-ended questionnaire is more frustrating and threatening to special populations of participants (e.g., culturally different, undereducated, or marginally literate) (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire method that was both open and close-ended for the male ex-offender students. The purpose of this questionnaire (Appendix A) was to extract information about students’ age, ethnicity, and family and support situation. This questionnaire also served as a vehicle to verify eligibility based on the sampling criteria for the study, including that each student ex-offender had been released from incarceration at least 90 days prior to the commencement of this study.

Some of the close-ended questions seemed to create frustration for the ex-offender participants; therefore, the researcher suspended using a portion of the written questionnaire and proceeded to verbally ask the participants these questions during the interview, which was audiotaped and transcribed. A valuable lesson from this experience is that written questionnaires may be problematic when conducting research involving an ex-offender student population. Frustration arose from not being sure how to interpret some of the questions that were being asked of the ex-offender students. Having the opportunity to explain the questions during the interview produced better results.

Field Notes

Field notes are written descriptions of what a researcher sees, hears, thinks, and experiences in the process of data gathering and reflection in a qualitative study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The field notes are done after each research session, observation, or interview, when the researcher normally writes out, if possible on a computer, what had occurred. The researcher provides an account of people, places, activities, events, objects, and conversations (Bogdan & Biklen).

Merriam (1998) states that a study's findings ultimately emerge when an observation is written down or recorded on a computer from the time of consumption of raw data. She acknowledges that there are different formats, but a set of notes typically begins with the place, time, and purpose of the observation. It is also beneficial to record the participants who are present, or in any case, to identify the people and how many are present (Merriam, 1998). She states that an important element of field notes is observer comments. Comments consist of the researcher's feelings, initial interpretation, reactions, and working hypotheses.

In this study, the researcher wrote field notes after observing the participants in many activities, including in the classrooms and at job fairs. This data collection method enabled the researcher to have written descriptions of what she saw, thought, and experienced during the data gathering and reflection process. Because the observations were written from the on-set of collecting raw data, the researcher was able to begin the identification of emerging categories that evolved into themes.

Observation

Observation is a common technique for collecting data in a qualitative study (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Merriam and Simpson suggest observation as a method of research when it is (a) supportive of a designed research purpose; (b) planned intentionally, (c) documented analytically, and (d) subjected to controls and checks on validity and reliability. Creswell (2007) outlines six steps needed in the observation procedure: (a) decide on a location to be observed; (b) select when, what, or who to observe, and for how long; (c) decide on a function to be understood as an observer; (d) create an observational protocol as a technique for documenting data in the field; (e) record facets such as pictures of the participant, the natural setting, precise activities and events, and the researcher's reactions; and (f) if the researcher is a stranger, have someone do an introduction and during the observation, be friendly, passive, and objective in the first couple of sessions.

Yin (2003) describes two types of observation: direct observation and participant observation. He indicates that when an investigator visits the location of the case study site, this is direct observation. Whereas, participant observation means that the researcher is a participant in the process, as well as an observer. There are circumstances

in which the researcher may take part in an assortment of functions within a case study approach and could in fact participate in the phenomenon being studied (Yin).

Yin (2003), explains the strengths and weaknesses of direct and participant observation. In direct observation the strengths are (a) reality (reports on events in real time), and (b) contextual (reports framework of the event). He also states that there are four weaknesses: (a) takes a lot of time; (b) reflexivity (researcher's presence may bring about a different outcome); (c) selectivity (unless extensively covered); and (d) cost (hours of observation). The strengths of participant observations are: (a) reality and contextual reporting, as is the case with direct observations, and (b) understanding interpersonal activities. He describes the weaknesses as (a) those described for direct observations, and (b) bias due to the researcher's management of events.

In this qualitative research study, both direct and participant observations were conducted. The researcher spent time at CCCSI to become familiar with the educational training being offered to ex-offenders. She observed the behavioral interaction between student support staff and students in the context of the institution. As a participant observer, the researcher began assisting the Apprenticeship Program Staff with their events in order to become more familiar with the ex-offender students at CCCSI. This also allowed the students to become more familiar with the researcher, thus facilitating the productivity of subsequent interviews. The researcher was also able to conduct direct observations during visits to the participants' classrooms when actual job interview sessions were conducted with potential employers from the business sector. In addition, she observed seminars that included interviewing techniques specifically designed to

assist students with criminal records during job interviews. These seminars proved to be a tremendous help in her research.

Interviews

Interviews are probably the most commonly used data collection technique in qualitative case study research (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Merriam and Simpson state that interviews vary from highly structured, where detailed “questions and the order in which they are asked are determined ahead of time, to unstructured where one has topic areas to explore but neither the questions nor the order are predetermined” (p. 100). They also assert that semistructured interviews are most commonly used. In semistructured, or less structured interviews, either all of the questions are more flexibly worded (open ended), or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions (Merriam, 1998). Willis (2007) states that when conducting a qualitative case study situated in an interpretive paradigm, researchers tend to prefer semistructured and so-called open or unstructured interviewing. Moreover, according to Merriam (1998), face-to-face encounters are generally the most common practice for interviewing, and the primary goal of the researcher is to find out what is on and in an informant’s mind.

“Interview is a purposeful conversation, usually between two people but sometimes involving more, that is directed by one in order to get information from the other” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) there are two ways to use interviews in qualitative research: (a) as the dominant approach for data collection, or (b) in combination with document analysis, participant observation, or other techniques. In all of these circumstances, the interview is employed to gather in-depth data from the participant’s account of their story, thereby assisting the researcher

with insights needed to report on how participants interpret their story in the world in which they live.

Yin (2003), profiles the strengths and weaknesses of interviewing in a qualitative study. As strengths, interviews are (a) targeted (center directly on the case study area under exploration) and (b) insightful (give perceived causal assumptions). Whereas potential weaknesses result from (a) bias of inadequately structured questions, (b) bias in the answers, (c) inaccuracies because of poor recall, and (d) participant reflexivity (the participant says what they think the researcher wants to hear). Recognition and understanding of these strengths and weaknesses enabled this researcher to improve the quality of her interviews through careful preparation and enhanced sensitivity to participant responses.

Creswell (2007), suggests eight steps in the interviewing procedure: (a) use one of the purposeful sampling methods to select participants; (b) decide what style of interview is realistic and will yield the most helpful data to answer research question; (c) use sufficient recording procedures when managing face-to-face interviews; (d) create and utilize an interview protocol, with open-ended question; (e) improve the interview questions through pilot testing; (f) decide on the site for conducting the interview; (g) confirm consent from the participant before starting the interview; and (h) adhere to the interview questions, and conclude the interview within the specified time.

For this study, the researcher used the steps in the interviewing process as described by Creswell (2007). The participants were selected based on networking and criterion purposeful sampling. The researcher situated her interview questions to gain answers for the research questions. The interviews were face-to-face and audio taped.

Open-ended questions enabled data collection in a form that lends itself to direct quotes. A protocol (Appendixes B, C, D) was used to ensure consistency in administering the semistructured interviews. The interviews were conducted in a room that was a comfortable venue for the ex-offender participants and employers, and in the offices of participant administrators and staff. The participants and the researcher signed the informed consent forms before interviews took place; one copy was given to the participant and one was retained by the researcher. Finally the interviews lasted approximately 1-2 hours, with the understanding that a second, follow-up interview might be needed to clarify information, or address additional questions that had arisen during the research process. In response to Yin's (2003) concerns regarding various forms of bias that can enter into interviews, the researcher used multiple data sources for triangulation.

Methods and the Research Questions

The researcher used two data collection methods to answer Research Question 1, how do correctional institutions prepare male inmates for entry into the workforce: (a) documents review and (b) individual student interviews. First, the researcher reviewed numerous online documents on the Illinois Department of Correction Web site related to reentry for ex-offenders. Second, the researcher used the transcribed interviews from the six male ex-offenders to address and triangulate data for answering Research Question 1.

Four sources of data were used to address Research Question 2, what types of programs are offered by the case study institution to assist male ex-offender students with reentry into the workforce: (a) documents review, (b) field notes, (c) observations, and (d) interviews. First, the researcher analyzed documents that were provided by CCCSI.

The documents included student handbooks, enrollment cards, individual educational plan forms, financial aid forms, and the Compass test (an entrance examination that all CCCSI students must take). Second, the researcher used the field notes that were written after interviews and observations. The field notes documented the researcher's thoughts regarding what she had seen and heard. Third, data was analyzed from the direct observation conducted by the researcher when she visited the case study site and the classroom. Participant observation was employed where the researcher participated in a job fair with the CCCSI and observed interviews between potential employers and the male ex-offenders. Fourth, transcribed interviews from the six male ex-offenders and the four CCCSI staff were analyzed to identify themes and responses that provided insights for this question.

Three data collection methods, documents, field notes, and interviews, were used to address Research Question 3, what types of barriers do male ex-offenders face in seeking employment. Although a few of the sources from the literature review contributed to understanding the types of barriers that ex-offenders face upon entry into the workforce, the researcher primarily relied on the transcriptions of interviews with male ex-offenders, CCCSI staff, and potential employers for the analysis.

Observations and transcribed interviews of the male ex-offender students, CCCSI's professional staff, and potential employers were the two main data sources used to answer Research Question 4, how can the case study institution help ex-offender students overcome the barriers, thus facilitating entry into the workforce. The literature also provided insights that offered triangulation for responses to this research question.

For Research Question 5, how can the case study community college obtain greater acceptance from employers for these graduating students who are also marginalized ex-offenders, the researcher primarily analyzed the interviews transcriptions from the students, CCCSI professionals, and potential employers.

Data Collection Procedures

The word procedure refers to the activities or steps that explain the use of data gathering methods, and the goal of the procedures is to create trustworthy data relevant to the research questions (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Creswell (2007) also asserts that data collection is a sequence of interconnected procedures meant for assembling good information to answer the study's research questions. According to Yin (2003), field procedures should emphasize five major tasks in collecting data: (a) gaining access to organizations and individuals; (b) having sufficient resources while in the field; (c) having a procedure for requesting help and guidance while in the field; (d) having a specific timeframe and clear schedule for data collection activities; and (e) providing for unforeseen occurrences, including modifications in the accessibility of interviewees as well as modifications in the motivation and mood of the case study researcher.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the researcher received permission for access from the President of the case study institution. Following this procedure, she met with the Provost of the case study institution's technical subsidiary and a contact person in his office, who facilitated the researcher's arrangement to go into the classroom. The contact person from the Provost Office also referred the researcher to the potential employers, who became interview participants. While visiting the class, the researcher explained the study and requested volunteers from among those students who met the criteria for the

study: male, between the ages of 20 and 40, and released from incarceration at least 90 days prior to the study. Some of the students told other qualified students about the interviews and were directed to contact the researcher by email or by phone to inform her of their willingness to participate. Upon contacting the researcher the students were given a date and time to meet in the learning resource center at CCCSI for their interviews. The researcher sat on one side of the table and interviewees were seated on the other side; all six ex-offender students' interviews were audio taped.

The case study institution President initially directed the researcher to the appropriate department for interviews with staff pertinent to the research study. The researcher was familiar with the staff; therefore, she selected and then asked specific individuals via telephone or by visiting their offices if they were willing to participate in the study. The researcher also presented the case study institution employees with the signed letter given to her by the President granting her permission to conduct the study at CCCSI. These interviews were conducted in the staff members' offices and subsequently the transcriptions were e-mailed, or delivered to the participants with a request that they review the transcripts for accuracy.

The potential employers were initially contacted by the Provost's office to request their participation in the study. Once they agreed, the researcher was allowed to telephone the potential employers and arrange an interview meeting place and time. One of the potential employers was interviewed in the same conference room as the students and the other was interviewed at a job fair. Participants signed the informed consent forms before the interviews took place. The interviews were transcribed and returned to

the potential employer participants to ensure the researcher had accurately captured the essence of their perspectives and recommendations.

During the interviews the students were given informed consent forms to sign and a demographic questionnaire to complete. Some students experienced difficulty with writing answers to the questionnaires; therefore, the researcher provided further explanation of the questions. For example, the first two students interviewed thought the questions might have a meaning different from that intended, such as receiving food stamps or other government services. In the interest of time, the researcher asked the students to fill out the questionnaire partially and the other questions were addressed orally; these responses were tape-recorded. Following the interviews, the researcher transcribed the tapes and arranged another meeting with each of the students in the case study's learning resource center to review their typed transcription and ensure that the transcription accurately captured their story and perspectives.

The researcher contacted the Assistant Dean of Student Services at CCCSI to request permission to examine the documents used in the enrollment process for the participating case study students. The Assistant Dean of Student Services presented the researcher with enrollment cards, testing information, financial aid applications or worksheets, and student individual educational plan worksheets. These documents along with interviews, observations, and field notes were analyzed by the researcher to gain a fuller understanding of the student participants and for data triangulation to answer Research Question 2.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, there are at least three components that are essential to data analysis: (a) description and classification of the data collected, (b) arrangement and abbreviation of the data by placing it into themes through a coding and condensing of codes process, and (c) presentation of the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell, 2007). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) say that data analysis is the method of analytically searching and organizing the interviews, field notes, documents and other data collected to produce findings. For a qualitative researcher, analyzing transcripts and various other types of data poses a demanding task (Creswell). Yin (2003) argues that analyzing case study data is particularly challenging because the techniques and strategies are not clear. He states that a researcher needs to develop a general strategy for conducting analysis and prioritize what will be analyzed and why. In this study, the researcher used the research questions as the first strategy to guide the data analysis. The theoretical framework, which is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, also helped the researcher to understand some of the themes when analyzing the data in this study.

Yin (2003) asserts that many researchers start qualitative case studies without having any idea how the data is to be analyzed. Understanding the data entails reducing, consolidating, and interpreting interview transcripts, as well as what the researcher has read and seen; it is a systematic way of making meaning of the data (Merriam, 1998). Merriam explains that data analysis is a complicated technique that encompasses shifting back and forth between raw data and abstract concepts using description and interpretation processes. Bogdan and Biklien (2007) state that inductive reasoning is "thinking from the particular to the general. . . . [thus] in qualitative research, letting the

analysis emerge during data collection rather than structuring a study around a hypothesis or narrow questions” (p. 272).

Two of the important data analysis strategies in qualitative research are analytic induction and content analysis. Merriam (1998) asserts that the researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it to another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These constant comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances (Merriam). In this study, the researcher used content analysis because it allowed the comparison of data from the content of documents, demographic questionnaires, field notes, observations, and individual interviews to build themes through analytic induction that enabled a better understanding of the phenomenon. Thus the constant comparative method and analytic induction enabled the researcher to constantly compare themes that emerged from each of the source documents to develop categories of themes that would contribute in answering the study’s research questions.

Data in qualitative research is analyzed simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1998; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Throughout this study the researcher reflected on what was heard and seen during the data collection phase. The researcher documented in her field notes what she had seen, heard, and interpreted after every observation and interview. This method of data collection allowed her to create a document audit trail, which strengthened the validity of the study. The reflections helped in conceptualizing tentative themes to begin and inform the focused data analysis process. In this qualitative case study, the researcher processed the data using Creswell’s (2007) data analysis spiral image framework. He states that the researcher engages in the process of moving in

analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach. There are four loops in this framework: (a) data management, (b) reading and memoing, (c) describing, classifying, interpreting, and (d) representing (Creswell).

Data Management

The first loop in the spiral is data management. According to Merriam (1998), data management is divided into three stages: (a) data preparation, (b) data identification, and (c) data manipulation. Data preparation entails transcribing interviews, typing notes, and inputting the data. In the research study, Microsoft Word software was used for the data preparation process. As noted by Merriam, this software is especially useful for text editing, word searching, spell checking, line numbering, and the search and replace function. The purpose of the second phase, data identification, is to separate text data into analytically significant and easily locatable sections. Throughout the third phase, data manipulation, these sections are searched, organized, recovered, and rearranged (Merriam). Thus, as suggested by Merriam and Creswell, the researcher analyzed the data gathered either by hand, or using the computer and converted her files into appropriate text units, which comprised a word, a sentence, or part of entire story (Creswell).

Reading and Memoing

The second loop of the spiral data analysis process is reading and memoing. As suggested by Creswell (2007), the researcher reviewed the data gathered in its entirety many times for familiarization and immersion in the content before trying to make sense of the data. Writing notes or memos in the margins of documents, questionnaires, field

notes, and transcripts assisted in beginning the process of searching the computer files. The researcher's memos included ideas, short phrases, and key concepts.

Describing, Classifying, and Interpreting

The third loop of the spiral is describing, classifying, and interpreting. Creswell (2007) states the process of developing themes or codes is at the heart of qualitative case study data analysis. In this part of the data analysis loop, "researchers describe in detail, develop themes or dimensions through some classification system, and provide an interpretation in light of their own views or views of perspectives in the literature" (Creswell, p. 151). For this study, the researcher developed themes and a set of descriptive detail codes to describe, classify, and interpret the data.

In this descriptive detail coding process, the researcher formulated initial counts of data codes and ascertained how frequently codes emerged in the database (Creswell, 2007). Although it is argued that in qualitative research counting codes may not convey equal emphasis and may represent contradictory views, as noted by Merriam (1998), the process enabled "simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content" (p. 160). In this study, the researcher used counts to identify both common and unique responses and perspectives. Quotes related to the coded responses were later selected to provide the rich, thick description that is essential for conveying and explaining the research findings, while including participant voice.

The next step involved classifying the data. Following Creswell's (2007) framework, this researcher separated the texts in the data collection documents, and looked for themes and categories of information. The researcher particularly sought

insights that would contribute to a detailed description of how community colleges can assist male ex-offenders to enter the workforce. An inherent part of identifying themes and making sense of the data is interpretation that is based on the researcher's insights, hunches, and intuition. "In the process of interpretation, the researchers step back and form larger meanings of what is going on in the situations or sites" (Creswell, p. 154).

The final loop in the spiral of data analysis is representing (Creswell, 2007). In this phase of the data analysis process, the researcher presented an in-depth and detailed picture of ways in which the case study institution assists ex-offenders with their pathway into the workforce. This has been accomplished through tables and narratives that include the thick quotes of respondents.

Validity and Reliability

"Qualitative researchers strive for 'understanding,' that deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting personally with participants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to obtain detailed meanings" (Creswell, 2007, p.201). The term validity can be translated into believability or trustworthiness; can one believe the research findings reported (Willis, 2007)? There are other terms used in a qualitative research to establish validity and trustworthiness such as, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (1998) says, "validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (p. 199). She also addresses the concerns in a qualitative study related to internal validity, reliability, and external validity by suggesting appropriate strategies for dealing with them.

Internal Validity

Merriam (1998) states, “internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality” (p. 201). In this study, the researcher used three of Merriam’s six basic strategies to enhance internal validity: (a) triangulation, (b) member checks, and (c) researcher biases.

For triangulation, the researcher uses various sources of data to validate and crosscheck emerging findings. Yin (2003) also points out that the use of various sources of data in case studies permit a researcher to access a wider array of information and enables data triangulation, which enhances a study’s validity. In this study, multiple sources were used to triangulate, and thereby enhance the validity of the research, including documents, questionnaires, field notes, observations, and interviews. Although these multiple sources helped to inform the findings, the researcher mostly used interviews with those who had experienced the phenomenon. The researcher directly accessed, interpreted, and synthesized the individual stories to present a holistic view of the phenomena and thus strengthened the internal validity of the research (Merriam, 1998). The interview questions were constructed out of the literature and the research questions. The participants presented many realities concerning the barriers that ex-offenders face in attempting to enter the workforce.

The second strategy, member checks, was also employed in this study. Member check is the term used to describe when “the researcher solicits participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Merriam (1998) agrees that member checks refer to taking data and unconfirmed understandings of participants’ stories back to the individuals to see if the researcher has captured the

essence of their interpretation. This strategy was used to enhance the validity of the interviews that were conducted by researcher. The researcher returned the transcriptions to the interviewees via email or in person-to-person meetings to ensure that the researcher had captured accurately the essence of their stories.

Control of researcher biases or reflexivity is the fourth strategy that was used by explaining the researcher's worldview, assumptions, and theoretical viewpoint at the beginning of the study (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2007) also says that an explanation of potential bias from the beginning "of the study is important so that the reader understands the researcher's position and any biases or assumptions that impact the study" (p. 208). He states that in this explanation, "the researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study" (p. 208). Willis (2007) agrees with Merriam and Creswell stating that the researcher should acknowledge their values and biases to the best of their ability. He also states that "if you are studying a particular subject because you have a relative who has a particular problem, say that in the introduction to your study" (p. 210). In chapters 1 and 2 the researcher disclosed her background and biases in relationship to the study, including the fact that she is the mother of five sons and has knowledge of criminal statistics that could have an impact on their lives.

Reliability

Merriam (1998) states that the replication of research and its results are important to determining the reliability of the research being conducted. She goes on to explain that reliability in qualitative research involves the researcher's search to explain and describe the reality of an individual's world, according to their understanding of it. Creswell

(2007) asserts, “reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good-quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape” (p. 209). However, according to Merriam (1998), the term reliability in the traditional sense seems to be something of a misfit when applied to qualitative research, which is the reason that Lincoln and Guba suggest thinking about the dependability or consistency of the results obtained from the data. Merriam states that the question then is not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected.

Merriam (1998) describes three strategies for ensuring that findings are dependable: (a) the researcher’s position, (b) triangulation, and (c) audit trails. The first strategy, the researcher’s position, occurs when the researcher describes the theory and assumptions behind the study. For the second strategy, triangulation, the researcher uses various sources of data collection and analysis to enhance reliability in the study. Finally, the third strategy, audit trail, happens when the researcher describes in great detail the data gathering, how categories were developed, and how the researcher made decisions during the study.

This study can be replicated in some fashion if given similar settings and participants; however, it would be difficult to come to the same findings and conclusions because the exceptional circumstances of this research cannot be replicated, nor can the same participants with the same stories be produced. But triangulation, audit trail, and other previously mentioned procedures used in this study have generated results that are consistent and dependable.

External Validity

Willis (2007) states external validity “asks the question of generalizability: To what populations, settings, treatment variables, and measurement variables can this effect be generalized” (p. 216)? Merriam and Simpson (2000) confirm that external validity, or the degree to which results can be generalized to other circumstances, has been the cause of many discussions in qualitative research literature. “Overall, the issue of generalizability centers on whether it is possible to generalize from a single case, or from qualitative inquiry in general, and if so in what way” (Merriam, 1998, p. 208)?

One of the strategies suggested by Merriam (1998) to improve the likely outcome of the findings of a qualitative case study and develop some level of generalization is rich, thick description. The researcher gives in-depth details of the study outcome so the readers can decide if the research situation and their situation are similar, and hence, whether results can be transferred. In this study the researcher provided rich, thick descriptions in the discussion of the data analysis and findings in chapter 4, thus enabling the reader to transfer information and findings to their own unique situations (transferability).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were in the forefront of the researcher’s mind throughout this qualitative study and the researcher employed several methods to protect the study participants. Creswell (2007) describes five ethical issues: informed consent procedures; deception or covert activities; confidentiality toward participants, sponsors, and colleagues; benefits of research to participants over risks; and participant requests that go beyond social norms. Merriam (1998) asserts that ethical issues involve weighing the

benefits and costs of a research study, with safety measures to safeguard the rights of participants, and the presentation of research results.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) say there are two principles that govern ethical guidelines with human subjects in qualitative research: informed consent and the safeguard of participants from harm. They also state that the guidelines aim to insure that (a) participants enter the research study voluntarily, acknowledging the reason of the research and the obligations and dangers that are entailed; and (b) participants do not encounter risks that outweigh the gains they acquire for participation in the study.

These guidelines are typically applied “through the use of forms that the researcher fills out in which he or she gives a description of the study, what will be done with the findings, possible dangers to the subjects, and other pertinent information” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 48). Committees on human subjects, also known as “institutional review boards (IRBs), reside in all universities and colleges; “they review proposals, checking that the proposed research insures proper informed consent and safety for the participants” (Bogdan & Biklen p. 48) (Appendix E, F, G).

This researcher initially sought permission from the university’s institutional review board to conduct the research, thus ensuring that proper informed consent and safety procedures were clearly and correctly established. Other ethical considerations included seeking and receiving permission from the President of the Community College Case Study Institution to conduct research at the institution.

One of the major responsibilities of this researcher was to properly inform all participants of the objectives of this case study. Then it was essential for the researcher to fully discuss any concerns that the participants may have had regarding participation in

this research. Finally, this researcher also reviewed the consent form with the participants, checked for questions or concerns, and gave each participant a signed copy. This researcher then reiterated to the participants and all involved in this case study that measures would be taken to ensure confidentiality for the participants and the institution. Confidentiality was carefully employed to protect the trust that the student participants, CCCSI professional staff, and potential employers gave to the researcher as they told their stories. The researcher did not use participants' names or the community college's name on any of the research documents.

Limitations

This single case study has two primary limitations. First, through purposeful sampling, the research was conducted using a community college in one of Illinois' largest cities as the case. This limits the generalizability of findings; however, by providing rich thick description, readers can determine if aspects of the research study are transferable to their own community college contexts. Second, in qualitative research there are two types of potential bias: (a) participant and (b) researcher. In chapter 1, and this chapter, the researcher reflected on her thoughts and interpretation as a means of controlling her biases. The participants may have generated bias by being guarded in the answers they gave during the interviews; this is particularly possible with the ex-offender participants who may not be fully trusting. The researcher was aware of this potential bias and employed multiple data collection methods, triangulation of data and methods, as well as constant reflection on her thinking and the participants' reactions to minimize bias in this study.

Summary

This study is a qualitative case study situated in an interpretive paradigm, which enables an investigation into the perceptions of the participants by recording their experiences as they journey on the pathway to entering the workforce. This design also enabled exploration of how community colleges can assist this marginalized population on their journey. The researcher used multiple data collection methods (documents, demographic questionnaire, field notes, observation, and interviews), with the main data source being semistructured interviews comprising open-ended questions. The researcher used purposeful sampling to select the case study institution and participants. The data analysis procedures were described and the next chapter will discuss the findings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter begins with a description of the study's participants and then presents the findings in relation to each research question. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore (a) barriers that male ex-offenders encounter in their pursuit of reentering the workforce, and (b) various types of education and support service that community colleges could provide in order to assist this marginalized population in overcoming these barriers. Content analysis, which allowed the comparison of data from the documents, demographic questionnaires, field notes, observations, and individual interview transcriptions, was used to build themes through analytic induction. Thus, the constant comparative method and analytic induction enabled the researcher to constantly compare themes as they emerged from each of the data sources to develop categories of themes that would contribute to answering the study's research questions.

Description of Participants

Student Participants

Demographic questionnaires were used to ensure that student participants met the study's selection criteria, as well as for collecting data. Tables 1 and 2 summarize information provided on the questionnaires by ex-offender student participants, either in writing or verbally. A portion of the demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) was comprised of open-ended questions, while another portion of the questionnaire required the students to select one of the alternatives given.

The student participants were coded as S and numbered in the order that they were interviewed. Table 1 shows their age, ethnicity, marital status, and whether they are current or former students of CCCSI. Two of the participants are former students who completed their programs in May 2008 (S1) and May 2007 (S4). They have been grouped with, and are referred to as ex-offender students in the study.

Table 1

Student Characteristics

Participant = S	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Student at CCCSI
S1	39	Black, non-Hispanic	Single	Formerly
S2	30	Black, non-Hispanic	Single	Currently
S3	28	Black, non-Hispanic	Single	Currently
S4	40	Black, non-Hispanic	Single	Formerly
S5	37	Black, non-Hispanic	Single	Currently
S6	33	White, non-Hispanic	Single	Currently

As illustrated in Table 2, all of the male student ex-offender participants reported that they had some type of family support upon returning home from incarceration. Three of the six male ex-offender participants reported that they had been released and received support from a recovery house. One of the six participants reported having received some type of social services upon returning home and one participant reported that he did not have any support other than family. Meeting a criterion of the study, all male ex-offender participants reported that they had been released from incarceration at least 90 days prior to participating in this research.

Table 2

Student Support and Release Time

Respondent = S	Family Support	Other Support	Released from Incarceration
S1	Mother	Recovery House	5 months
S2	Family	Social Services	2 years
S3	Aunt & Uncle	Friends	6 months
S4	Family	None	1 ½ years
S5	Sister	Recovery House	7 years
S6	Grandmother	Recovery House	5 months

CCCSI Professional Participants

To further assist in answering the research questions, participants from two other populations were interviewed: (a) CCCSI professionals and (b) potential employers.

Four CCCSI professionals were selected for this study based on their extensive experience with ex-offender students. The researcher sought to explore various types of educational and support services that CCCSI provided for the male ex-offender students and gain insights from the CCCSI professionals' understanding of the barriers that this marginalized population faces when attempting to enter the workforce. Also, these participants were able to provide information concerning services that CCCSI provides after students complete their college programs. Thus the interviews sought to discover the CCCSI professionals' understanding of educational and support services that are provided to ex-offender students at their community college.

CCCSI professional participants were coded based on their position and the order in which they were interviewed. The two student services personnel were coded as SS1 and SS2. The two administrator personnel were coded as A1 and A2. SS1 works in the Student Services Department as a College Advisor at CCCSI's main campus, and SS2 is in the Student Services Department working as a College Clerical Supervisor 1 at the subsidiary institution. A1 is the Assistant Dean of Student Services and A2 is Director of Job Placement in the Construction Technology office of the Provost at the subsidiary institution.

Potential Employer Participants

Two potential employers were selected as participants to gain their perspectives concerning the barriers male ex-offenders face when attempting to enter the workforce. Another purpose was to explore various means that community colleges can use to obtain greater acceptance from employers for graduating ex-offender students.

These particular potential employers were selected because they have a partnership with CCCSI, which enables them to bid on contracts through the Mayor's Office if they hire some of CCCSI's students. The potential employer participants were coded as E1 and E2. E1 is the CEO of a vocational training and construction company that hires individuals to work on construction projects. E2 is a project manager for a roofing company.

In summary, the participants for this study were six male ex-offender students, four CCCSI professionals, and two potential employers. Demographic questionnaires were used for the six students only. In addition, data from interviews with all the

participants, field notes, documents, and observations were analyzed, compared, contrasted, synthesized, and evaluated to find answers for the study's research questions.

Research Question 1

Two data collection methods were used to address Research Question 1: How do correctional institutions prepare male inmates for entry into the workforce? The researcher analyzed online documents retrieved from the Illinois Department of Correction Web site and transcribed interviews with the six male ex-offender students. The students were asked to discuss any education or training they received while incarcerated. Two major themes that emerged regarding the correctional institutions' preparation of male inmates for entry into the workforce were educational skills and vocational skills.

Educational Skills

The Illinois Department of Correction (IDOC) has indicated that the correctional facilities link education with reducing recidivism; the information regarding education is listed under the section about reducing recidivism on the IDOC Web site (www.idoc.state.il.us). According to the Web site, inmates participate in various programs being offered at the prison through school districts and community college partnerships when funding is available. The partnerships were able to assist IDOC with equipping some inmates with educational skills such as Adult Basic Education (ABE) or obtaining a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), which is the equivalent of a high school diploma.

Comparing the information from the Illinois Department of Correction Web site with the six male student ex-offender participants' transcribed interviews confirmed that

the correctional facilities did offer ABE and GED programs; two of the six participants received a GED while incarcerated. However, the Web site also indicated that funding for education and training is low due to cuts in the Illinois Department of Correction's budget. One of the student participants (S4) commented that education and training opportunities were limited.

S4: I took basic high school classes just to pass the time, because I already had a high school diploma and the facility did not have anything else to offer.

Vocational Skills

Vocational skills was another theme that emerged while searching the Illinois Department of Correction Web site for information concerning how the correctional institutions prepare male inmates for entry into the workforce. The Web site (www.idoc.state.il.us) reported that vocational skills provided for inmates proved to be beneficial in reducing the rate of recidivism. The facilities' partnerships with local community colleges offered college level classes for inmates able to participate in college level studies. The local community colleges also provided Cooperative Work Training (CWT) for vocational skills training programs that offer various vocational certificates upon completion of the programs while in prison.

In the interviews, participants revealed that some of the correctional facilities in Illinois did offer vocational skills training for the inmates through partnering with community colleges. S1 participated in several vocational skills training courses while incarcerated. S6 would have attended vocational skills training courses, but he was released before he was able to register.

S1: I went to college, I went to the trade of carpentry, and I went to college of the trade of custodian.

S6: I got my GED. I was going to a training program, but I got out before I could get in the program.

Although S1 received vocational skills training courses while incarcerated, in contrast to what was reported on the Illinois Department of Correctional Web site, he states that some of the educational activities were actually taught by the guards at the facility and not the school district or community college. According to S1, the guards at the correctional facility were not qualified (trained) to teach some courses; therefore, the delivery of educational services was limited. He talked about the pressure that the inmates are under while incarcerated which makes educating them difficult, particularly when guards are assigned the dual role of teaching.

S1: Education is hard in prison. You can rehabilitate prisoners but you can't educate them because the pressure they are constantly under. You got guards that are not educated; you got guards that are trying to teach somebody and can't teach themselves, so you can't educate somebody, when you are not at that level of education. So, I don't think that the correctional facility educate them. So let's say that I am a guard and I am trying to teach you something, but when you go back to your cell, I am always binding or always putting pain and situation on you for reasons; so now you got to allow yourself, your body to adjust to two things and sometime when a person don't have an education he don't know how to do that.

In summary, the correctional institutions report that they prepare the male inmates for entry into the workforce through partnerships with school districts and local community colleges. Partnering with these community resources enables the prisons to provide some inmates with educational and vocational skills. In this study, out of the six male ex-offender participants, two received a GED while incarcerated, one attended training, two received no education or training skills, and one went to basic high school classes to pass the time. However, in contrast to what was reported on the IDOC Web site, S1 received some of his vocational training while incarcerated from guards at the

facility. He reported that the guards were not qualified to teach the inmates and because of their dual role as guards and teachers, the inmates did not know how to receive these individuals as educators; the inmates only saw them as guards or rehabilitators.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 focuses on the case study institution's programs: What types of programs are offered by the case study institution to assist male ex-offender students with entry into the workforce? Four sources of data were used to identify and analyze themes that address this question: (a) documents, (b) field notes, (c) observations, and (d) interviews. The researcher analyzed documents that were provided by CCCSI, including student handbooks, enrollment cards, individual educational plan forms, financial aid forms, and the Compass test (an entrance examination that all CCCSI students must take). Field notes written after interviews and observations also were used.

Data were analyzed from direct observations conducted when the researcher visited the case study site and the classroom. Participant observation was employed when the researcher participated in a job fair at CCCSI and observed interviews between potential employers and the ex-offender students. The transcribed interviews from the six students and the four CCCSI staff were analyzed to identify themes and responses that provided insights for this research question. Five themes emerged from the triangulation of data: (a) construction programs, (b) recruitment, (c) financial assistance program, (d) tutoring program, and (e) tracking.

Construction Programs

The short-term training certificate programs that CCCSI offers for all its students, including ex-offenders, are Bricklayer, Construction Carpentry, Construction Painting,

Combination Welding, Concrete Masonry, Materials Soil Tester, and Plumbing and Fire Protection. All of these programs are 16 weeks in length, and the students are drug tested before they can enter the programs. The ex-offenders are restricted from enrolling in the Overhead Electrical Line Worker Program, which is a partnership effort between CCCSI and Commonwealth Edison, an Exelon company. It prepares students to work in current electrical power industries and one of the requirements is that students cannot have been convicted of a felony.

S1 and S4 talked about the benefits of the training and certifications they received from CCCSI and the good reputation of the case study institution's programs.

S1: I think it's a good program here because it gives you the ability to get into places where you can be able to help your family; just get a job....[CCCSI] allows me to be able to go and get a job on the level where the person will hire me because of the skills I've got. It's like I am not going there without anything, I am going there with something, as well as to help him as he is helping me.

S4: Well I got a couple of certificates from [CCCSI]. I went to work on one of them already for the plumbing industry and I am working on the one for bricklaying now....[CCCSI] have been doing real good, because I haven't been working years and since I came here, I've been getting steady work, so it's working out pretty good.

The observations conducted in May 2008 showed that CCCSI, in fact, provided hands on training for their students. Journeymen who are experts in their trade taught the classes. The students used power tools and had actually built a house outside the institution. This observation gave insight into the reason that CCCSI requires drug testing for its students. For their safety, it is important that students are able to use all of their mental faculties when operating power tools. The students appeared to talk freely and work well together in groups.

During the interviews, male ex-offender participants were asked to discuss the types of programs they were attending at CCCSI. All four current students were participating in the construction carpentry program. Of the two former students, S1 had a certificate in welding and S4 had a certificate in plumbing and fire protection and another one in bricklaying.

CCCSI professionals were asked to discuss the various programs and assistance provided by the case study institution for ex-offenders. Two of the four professional participants stated that CCCSI does not offer any programs specifically for ex-offenders; the ex-offenders are treated the same as other students—they are not singled out.

SS1: We do not have any specific program for ex-offenders. They can come here and there's no limitation for them. We don't have to know they are ex-offenders. To us they are coming to the institution to participate in furthering their education.

A2: We don't target necessarily ex-offenders, but our programs have job related apprenticeship opportunities for individuals that may have a criminal background. Some of the unions that we work with for our students do not do criminal background checks. This gives an ex-offender an opportunity to get a nice paying job without having to go through extreme criminal history checks. The Overhead Electrical Line Worker Program is the only program that this institution offers that ex-offenders cannot participate.

SS2: For ex-offenders, we have construction technology; they don't necessarily have to be high school graduates, but they have to take a special placement examination. Ex-offender students can't participate in the Overhead Lineman Program.

In summary, the responses from the professional participants about the services the institution provides for the ex-offender students indicate that CCCSI treats all students the same, thus all students receive the same level of assistance. However, if students disclose that they are ex-offenders, CCCSI professionals specifically explain related program requirements.

Recruitment

To garner a better understanding of what CCCSI offers to assist male ex-offender students with entry into the workforce, the professional staff was asked to discuss their efforts to include or recruit ex-offender students. Three of the four CCCSI professionals stated that the institution does make an effort to recruit ex-offenders. Expressing a somewhat different perspective, one professional stated that CCCSI does not target ex-offenders, but recruits all students.

A1: Yes we do have ex-offenders that come through here and they have gone through certain facilities that ex-offenders are housed and we recruit at these facilities.

SS2: Yes we do, a lot of our students that attend this institution are ex-offenders. I believe that while they are still incarcerated there is some type of marketing put into the jail system and social agencies around the city that we are here. So once they get out, it's almost like its set up for them to come here.

A2: Well again, we don't target them [ex-offenders], we just target students. I think that has been a very positive approach so far. Since I have been working here, which is four years; I have serviced many ex-offenders. I would reach to say that over 50% of those individuals placed in union apprenticeship positions here are ex-offenders. However, we don't treat them with that label (ex-offender students). We just call them students. I think that when you deal with them just as students first and you have confidential consultation with these students, to find out if they have some issues with a background, what they are, and then try to guide them in a career path, that will not hinder them and you can service ex-offenders better.

In summary, CCCSI does make an effort to recruit from facilities that house ex-offenders. Although A2, a professional who works in the Provost's office stated they did not target ex-offender students, he acknowledged that at least 50% of the institution's student population placed in union apprenticeship programs are ex-offenders. He also stated from his experience that treating ex-offenders as ordinary students and providing

them with career guidance through private consultations helps them in their efforts to find employment.

Financial Assistance Programs

A review of the financial aid documents revealed that financial aid is available for all students who qualify. Financial aid is federal dollars given to students who need assistance with paying for their education and it may be in the form of Pell Grants, Student Loans, and work-study. Students are not required to pay back the Pell Grant, whereas Student Loans must be repaid. Because many of the students are low income or no income, they may qualify to receive this financial assistance. These funds are provided on the basis of need and require that the student register for at least nine credit hours. Students can receive the full amount needed for the cost of attending the case study institution, which ranges between \$300 and \$5,000 depending on the program for which the student registers.

The data analyzed from interviews with CCCSI professionals showed that all students are encouraged to apply for financial aid. Moreover, all of the professional participants reported that students who meet the requirements are eligible to receive financial aid. However, SS1 stated that the ex-offender students might have problems with receiving financial aid when trying to enroll in the programs at the institution because Question 31 on the financial aid computerized application asks if the student has been convicted of possession or selling of illegal drugs while receiving financial aid. A “yes” response can be disqualifying.

A2 talked about the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) as another form of financial assistance for students who attend the institution. Ex-offender students can also

qualify for WIA, which comes from the State of Illinois and local officials to fund federal job training for adults, youth and dislocated workers. If the students qualify for the assistance, they receive up to \$5,000 to pay for their program, and related supplies. A1 stated that the institution has college advisors who speak with students about programs and services. When the advisors find out that a student is an ex-offender, they inform the student of the programs in which they are eligible to participate.

A1: We have a college advisor that talks to students regarding our programs. We let them know that they are eligible for our programs even though they are ex-offenders. We explain the entire construction program. We also let them know the admission requirement; we also insist that they apply for financial aid.

A2: The institution also has a program called WIA, Workforce Investment Act that is designed primarily to help students like ex-offenders get financial assistance to take classes, and this is provided through the State of Illinois. So, if an ex-offender goes through the WIA process in a timely manner, they can have their tuition paid, with no debt...WIA will pay up to 5,000 dollars per candidate. Depending on what they are taking up and what the expected outcomes are. If there is a strong probability that they will be getting employment from this training, then WIA will approve the funding.

In summary, CCCSI has two types of need based financial assistance for students who attend the institution. The information is delivered to the students by the college advisors, who then refer the students to the financial aid office. If students identify themselves as ex-offenders, the advisor will inform them of guidelines regarding qualifications based on their ex-offender status. A2 stated that if there is a strong probability, based on labor market demands, that a student will get employed after their training then WIA will approve the funding.

Tutoring Program

A review of documents showed that CCCSI provides tutoring for all students who do not make the required score of 8.6 in reading and math to enter the construction

technology programs. The tutoring center is open five days per week, Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Thus, the tutoring center is a source of assistance for ex-offender students. The center keeps statistics on how many students they help per semester and which ones are prepared to retest for enrollment in the construction programs; however, as noted previously, students are not specifically identified as being ex-offenders.

Tracking

CCCSI professionals were asked to discuss whether the institution tracked its students who are ex-offenders. A2 talked about tracking the graduating ex-offender students' employment records. The professionals stated that the institution does not have special methods in place to assist with the tracking of ex-offender students, but they try to keep in contact with all of their students, and this helps the institution to gain greater acceptance from the employers. The tracking at CCCSI is primarily handled in the Provost's office.

SS2: Once we find out a student is an ex-offender, we keep in contact, but not with just ex-offender students, we keep in contact with all our students, whether they are ex-offender or not...we are just starting to have an alumni association for the students who have completed and went on to something successful. We also have our Provost's office that normally keeps in contact with our students.

A1: Yes we do track our students and that's tracked through the Provost's office.

A2: Yes, I track all of the students' progress that is made. I go back to look at all aspects of the ex-offenders as students. When I track their employment records, I don't necessarily write down from the time that they become employed if they are ex-offenders. But what I do is when I do my retention report, the monitoring process, I note that they may have a criminal history...I also note whether they are union or nonunion...So, there are several categories that I use to track student's progress. I also look at their exit strategies in terms of whether they have any idea of becoming a journeyman, whether they are taking a job for economical reasons at the time, hoping to transition into their field of study, or whether that particular job that they took is a better fit. Because sometime

students go through classes and at the end of the classes they realize that is not the program they wanted. But, they have obtained a certain amount of skills going through the training and that qualifies them to be in that field. So we get them exposure then we talk to them about career paths. If they feel that is not exactly what they want to go into or they are having difficulties on a job site, we try to give them an option to look into another field of study.

In summary, the institution tracks the graduating ex-offender students to ensure that they are still employed. The tracking also helps to assess the programs and support services, with the results being used to improve the quality of programs and assist some graduating students who are struggling in the workforce.

Research Question 3

The third research question focused on obstacles encountered by ex-offenders as job seekers: What types of barriers do male ex-offenders face in seeking employment?

The review of literature contributed to understanding the types of employment barriers that ex-offenders face and highlighted four themes: (a) education, (b) work experience, (c) recidivism, and (d) life skills. The research findings triangulated with these themes, but the findings also provided additional insights. A synthesis of data resulted in identifying three themes, each of which had subthemes: personal barriers (recidivism, family background, and attitudes), institutional barriers (lack of education and financial aid), and workforce barriers (criminal background, rules and regulations, perceptions, mindset, and work experience).

Personal Barriers

During interviews, the six male ex-offenders identified and explained the personal barriers they experienced. They talked about returning home to their family and the same environment, thus interacting with some of the same people who shared or instigated criminal behavior before their incarceration. They stated that if CCCSI were not in the

community to provide an intervention through the availability of the construction technology programs, they would probably revert to some of their old behaviors. The six male ex-offenders were asked a variety of questions to gain insights into the social dynamics of their reintegration and their attitudes, and how they related and responded to others, such as peers and family members in their environment, or community. The purpose of these questions was to garner a better understanding of factors that affect recidivism, and the relationship between recidivism and employment.

Recidivism. The six male ex-offender student participants were asked about their previous criminal history; specifically, had they been incarcerated or convicted of a felony before their previous conviction. These questions were designed to gain an understanding of the participants' personal backgrounds or their pathways to previous success or failure upon reentering free society. Three ex-offender students reported on their cycle of going to prison, returning home and going back to prison (recidivism). They had been incarcerated for prior conviction(s) involving possession of controlled substances.

S1: Yes, I was convicted of having drugs.

S2: I was convicted for possession of controlled substance, drugs.

S6: Yes, it was a possession with the intent to deliver.

The other three participants had no prior convictions.

The ex-offender student participants were asked to discuss their thoughts concerning a link between unemployment and recidivism. Some of the ex-offender participants talked about how inability to secure employment and exclusion from state and federal welfare programs created desperation that may drive them to engage in

illegitimate money-earning enterprises prevalent in their communities. Four out of the six student participants thought that there was a direct link between unemployment and recidivism.

S6: Yes, when people don't have a job, they are going to make money one way or another.

S2: Yes, because when a person doesn't have a job, what else are they going to look forward to? I would go back to selling drugs or try to find a way to feed my children or put a spoon in my mouth. I grew up in one of the roughest areas in the city . . . housing projects. I have seen murders and shootings happen almost every day. I go on a life metaphor; if I made it, lived through that, because if you live to make it to 20 years old out of the . . . housing project, you are good anywhere.

S4: Yes, there is a direct link--I think so. If you don't have money, you are a target anyway. Because they [society] figure if you are in jail, you can work for free. They can pay you 30 cents an hour, so if you got a background [conviction], they don't want to give you a job, so they know they can lock you up and get you to work for 20 or 30 cents an hour.

Yet, S1 asserted that going back to jail did not have anything to do with unemployment, and instead the question should be why people go to jail in the first place. He felt that society did not create resources or the different support services for individuals who are in certain communities to become productive citizens. S2 said when an individual cannot eat or feed his family; he will resort to illegitimate means of obtaining income. His life metaphor of survival in the community in which he grew up is that if an individual can live past 20 years of age, then that individual can live anywhere and survive. He said that providing for his family in any way that he can is a way of life in his neighborhood.

S1: I would say that going back to jail don't have anything to do with it, but why people go to jail is because they don't have nothing to provide for them to be a part of society where they can help, as well in society. If you keep an individual in a spot where they can't accomplish anything, how can they be anybody?

S3: No, because I am unemployed now and I am not going to jail. I know a few guys who are unemployed and they are not going back to jail. It's all about what you want to do. You got a choice. Do the same thing you did to put you there or come to school like I am going. I don't think it's a link.

In summary, half of the student participants had been previously unsuccessful upon reentry into the free society, creating a cycle of going to prison, release, and returning to prison. All three of the students' prior arrests had resulted from drugs. S1 thought that unemployment and recidivism were not connected. He states that the understanding recidivism lies within the question of why people go to jail. S1 believed that this marginalized population had nothing in society to assist them in becoming productive citizens. However, most of the student participants did believe that if ex-offenders were unable to secure gainful employment, they would in fact become involved with illegal activities in order to survive.

Family background. A personal barrier that the six male ex-offender participants reported was their family background. Five out of the six participants had family members who had been incarcerated, and they responded as if this was part of the norm.

S1: Yeah, one of my brothers.

S2: My brother, my uncle, and two of my cousins.

S3: My brother and my uncle.

S4: I got four brothers and one sister, six of us all together. Out of the six of us, four of us have been incarcerated.

S5: I have about 48 male cousins only two have not been incarcerated.

In summary, for most of the male ex-offender students, experiences with incarceration were part of their family history.

Attitude. The ex-offender students discussed attitude as a barrier to entering the workforce. They talked about the importance of developing a better attitude, which would allow them to interact with others, think critically about situations before they acted or reacted, and resolve conflicts in a rational manner. The students were asked to discuss what they thought about employers' reluctance to hire ex-offenders. Five out of the six male ex-offender participants thought that employers are reluctant to hire them.

S1: Yes, employers are reluctant to hire ex-offender because they got the wrong interpretation of an ex-offender before you even come to them, or they know a little bit about you from your background, they already made a decision about you as an individual.

S2: Everybody needs a second chance in life. That is the reason why a lot of ex-offenders go back to jail. Because they come home even though they know their family is in their corner, they come home and they are ready to start living their life and they can't because people don't want to hire them. You got a lot of companies out there that get a lot of money for ex-offenders, but don't want to hire them. I feel that this has more to do with prejudice. What I meant by prejudice not the color of your skin, but its prejudice about your background.

S4: Yes I do. Well they always have on the application "have you ever been convicted of a felony, but it doesn't count against you." But, when you put it on the application, they don't ever call you back.

S5: Yes, a lot of jobs you go to, the first question that they ask; is "have you ever been convicted of a felony, yes or no, this doesn't mean that you will be barred from the job category," but if that was the case they wouldn't ask.

S3: Somewhat, to the employers they just don't trust ex-offenders.

Participant S6 said that employers in the trades were not concerned about an individual's ex-offender background.

S6: I don't think in the trades it matters much, maybe in the other jobs it does. But, I know in the trades, they will give you chance.

One of the six student participants talked about ex-offender students' attitudes toward employment and life in general. He stated that education is important in getting a

job or entering the workforce, but if a male ex-offender student is not taught how to deal with his negative perception of employers and the work place, thus his attitude or his way of thinking, he cannot be a productive citizen.

S1: If you don't change the way these cats [male ex-offenders] think, he can get a 90,000 dollars job and he will buy a \$90,000 car and park it in the housing projects. [CCCSI] is going to have to find a way to change these cat's attitudes.

One of the four CCCSI professionals also talked about the male ex-offender's attitude toward the workforce. He stated that these students must improve their attitudes to make the kind of money that is in construction. The ex-offender students will have to work with a wide range of people in this field and they are going to need a good attitude to work in this kind of environment. He stated that the ex-offender students should not have any negative preconceived idea about the people and the work environment in which they are about to enter.

A2: The ex-offender students are going to need an education to get the kind of money they are trying to make. When individuals are competing for the kind of dollars that are available in construction, you have to deal with a wide range of people, a wide range of issues, so you have to have as much working knowledge about the trade and enough good attitude to make you stand out, where they wouldn't look so much at your past but who you are now.

In summary, most of the male ex-offender participants thought employers were reluctant to hire individuals from this marginalized population. The students' attitudes were that some of the employers just went through a process to eliminate them before they had a chance to receive an interview via the application process. In order for the male ex-offender students to become productive citizens, S1 stated that the ex-offender participants (cats) need help with changing their attitudes. A2 stated that the ex-offender students needed to have a good attitude to deal with the wide range of issues and people in the construction field where there is competition for jobs.

Institutional Barriers

The institutional barriers theme encompasses obstacles that ex-offenders face upon entering CCCSI on their pathways into the workforce. It includes two subthemes that emerged from interviews with participating students and professionals: lack of education and financial aid disqualification.

Lack of education. To gain an understanding of the post release educational situation of the male ex-offender participants, they were asked to discuss their educational level. All of the ex-offender student participants talked about not having received any additional education or training after incarceration other than what they were receiving at CCCSI. Participant S1 also talked about ex-offenders not having the requisite education to get into CCCSI's training programs.

S1: I think first of all you should deal with the individual while you have them at hand, to find out the reason why he does the things he do, get to the root of the problem. See everybody is not doing wrong because they want to do wrong, they sometimes don't have no other choice. You say in society that you have these things for them but you really don't. You have them in schools where they learn less education and then when they give up, you say they should have gotten their education, but you never gave them a chance where they had a place to get their education or opportunities that they need to move to that level to be successful like they needed to be ... they don't have enough training out here for ex-offenders to receive the skills needed to make them more competitive and put them on the same level as someone without a felony conviction. So they don't have the same skills that are needed to get a certain job and this situation does not allow an ex-offender to qualify for the same job as a non ex-offender. The third one is you are dealing with a person with a lot of pressure upon him. So you need to have something that can teach him how to work with his pressure.

The professionals were asked to discuss barriers ex-offenders face after being admitted to CCCSI. They stated that although many of the ex-offender students have a high school diploma or a GED, when taking the Compass test, the scores are below the 8.6 needed in reading and math to enter the construction programs at the institution. A2

talked about the students' lack of education or proper documentation of high school diplomas or GEDs.

A2: One of the barriers that I can identify is simply an educational barrier. A lot of them have minimal education and some don't have the proper GED or high school diploma. They don't have the basic minimal reading and math skill that they need to get into the programs. A lot of them have been pretty banged up emotionally, or they feel that trying to get employment with a record is so difficult that they develop a sense of apathy about education and they don't pursue it with the same intensity as they do a job.

In comparing the interviews conducted with students and CCCSI professionals, both groups identified lack of education is one of the educational barriers that male ex-offenders encounter when entering CCCSI. Some of the male ex-offender students do not meet the reading and math score requirements on the Compass test; therefore, they cannot enter CCCSI's construction programs. S1 contributed his thoughts concerning the source of this problem by stating that ex-offenders did not get the proper education early in their lives because they attended schools with inferior educational programs.

Financial aid. As explained previously, if an ex-offender student was convicted of selling or possession of drugs while on financial aid, subsequently they may not be able to receive this form of financial assistance from the federal government. Question 31 on the computerized financial aid application asks students if they have had a conviction for the possession or selling of illegal drugs while they were receiving federal student aid (grants, loans, or work-study). If the answer to the question is yes, the students are prompted to an eligibility worksheet page and based on their responses, the computer gives students an eligibility date that will determine if the students may or may not receive financial aid. The worksheet page will inform the student that based on one offense, he is eligible to receive financial aid one year after the conviction date, for two

convictions, the student is eligible to receive financial aid two years after the conviction date, and for three offenses, the student can never receive financial aid. CCCSI professionals stated that ineligibility for financial aid is a barrier for some of the ex-offenders entering the institution.

SS1: There may be some problems with financial aid because of their ex-offender status because of the classification of the crime they committed; however there may be ways around them.

A1: A barrier they may have is financial aid. They have to do a work sheet and the work sheet gives them a date that they may be eligible for financial aid. If the felony is dealing with selling drugs, the students have barriers of getting financial aid.

In summary, lack of education was reported as a barrier to some ex-offender students when entering CCCSI because they cannot qualify for admission to the programs. Another barrier that was identified by the professionals at the institution is ineligibility for financial aid if the student has had a drug conviction.

Workforce Barriers

Workforce barriers also present challenging obstacles that ex-offenders must overcome in order to gain employment. The six male ex-offender students were asked to discuss their work history before they were incarcerated and after they had returned to the free world. These students were also asked to discuss the barriers they encountered in their pursuit of entering the workforce. The two potential employers were asked to discuss their company's hiring practices and the barriers that male ex-offenders encounter on their journey into the workforce. During the constant comparison and analysis of the interviews, four themes emerged: criminal background, rules and regulations, perceptions, and mindset.

Criminal background. To gain insights into the students' perceptions of the barriers they and other ex-offenders face when trying to enter the workforce, the students were asked to discuss these barriers. Of the six student participants, four thought that having a criminal background was a barrier that hindered male ex-offenders from getting employment; one thought that race was a factor and one student thought that the mindset of ex-offenders created a barrier.

S2: Pressure, refusals, a lot of people keeps getting refused, and not having anything. Having an x [ex-offender]. A person that doesn't have an x on their background will get the job quicker than a person that has an x in their background.

S6: Well, some employers are going to hold the felonies against you. You are going to have to know how to talk to the employers to get a job. I went through the Safer Foundation; they will teach you the different interviewing skills. You just have to be honest and tell them that you made a mistake and you are trying to change.

S4: Just having a number, that's a barrier right there. When they see that you are an ex-offender that is a barrier, that's a big barrier. Because don't nobody want to deal with you, not unless it's a program that offer the contractors monies for you to work for them. Then the government pays for you to work, and that is no better than like working for Manpower [day-to-day labor] or something like that and then you work three or four weeks and they are going to get rid of you; it is not a steady job and they are not going to try to keep you. They are not going to try to make you a part of their company. They just get the benefits and cut you a loose.

S1: An ex-offender is under a lot of pressure when trying to get a job. He has been told by him being an ex-offender he is not going to get a job. No matter what he does, he is already told that having a federal or having a felony on his background that keeps him out of particular job that could help him in this society. Because you cannot have a six or seven dollars an hour job and think you are going to survive in this society. So all the job that is worth something, they tell him by having a felony you can't get. I don't care if you do go to college or whatever you do, that ex-offender status is to hinder you. So he is living a life of trying to fight to do right but he is living a life where there is a lot of pressure on him.

To better understand the students' awareness of their criminal background, they were asked to discuss jobs they were restricted from because of their convictions.

S4: Not in the trades, that's why I took construction. Not written anywhere, but there is always an unwritten law. That is one of the reason I picked construction, because construction doesn't restrict you. Everybody in construction has some kind of background; they are not so bad in construction.

S6: Yeah, I wouldn't think that I could be a banker or something like that, probably with a felony, not that I want to be one. Anything that's dealing with large amounts of money or like maybe being a pharmacist or something like that, I am restricted from working. They are not going to let you be around drugs or anything.

S5: I went to HVAC, another technical school and a lot of companies well most of the HVAC companies did want to hire me, but they could not hire a person who had been convicted of a felony, because you are going into people residence.

S3: Some jobs won't hire you because you have a felony. Like a lot of these city jobs, some of them do and, some of them don't.

One of the male ex-offender students also talked about the perception of the unions as being the reason he is restricted from certain jobs.

S1: Yes, I would say that I am restricted from certain jobs. I believe that's my biggest part of my union situation. Because when I got charged with a crime, they treated me like I was an individual on the run and I never ran from the courts.

In summary, four male ex-offender students expressed that companies did not want to hire ex-offenders because of their convictions. S6's perspective seemed unusually optimistic in that he stated an ex-offender only had to be honest and learn interviewing skills to gain credibility with the employers. S4 stated that companies were only willing to hire an ex-offender if they received financial incentives to do so. S1 thought that having a felony keeps him out of jobs that pay enough to cover living expenses.

Three ex-offender students (S6, S5, and S3) seemed to understand at some level that the responsibilities of certain jobs require a higher level of trust and would exclude the hiring of ex-offenders because this would increase the employer's liability. S4 thought that there was no written restriction in the trade fields. S1 said that his criminal background was a reason for his union troubles. Thus, the students were aware of employment restrictions that were a condition of their parole.

The two employers were asked if their company did criminal background checks on potential employees. Both of the employers stated that their company did not do background checks. They talked about construction jobs being one of the professions not restricted entirely from ex-offenders, but companies have to be aware of the ex-offenders' convictions for security reasons.

E2: No we do not do criminal background checks. Based on the character and his truthfulness of the circumstances, but know that we realize that some places we go are very sensitive. Therefore, if there is a problem, as far as security is concerned, we might not set up an ex-offender for a certain job site, but there are plenty other jobs he can go and work very comfortably. All we are looking for is someone to do a good job.

To gain further information about the barriers ex-offenders may face when entering the workforce, the two participating employers were asked to discuss if their companies ask potential employees if they are ex-offenders. Both responded that their company does not ask potential employees this question; however, E1 stated that ex-offenders who are brought to their agency for a job might reveal that they are ex-offenders.

E1: We do not ask the potential employees if they are ex-offenders. But, if they are ex-offenders, a lot of times when they are brought to us or when they come for a job, they might tell us that they are ex-offenders. But that does not affect them getting hired.

In summary, the two potential employers' companies do not do criminal background checks and they do not ask if someone is an ex-offender. The employers relied on the employees to inform them of their criminal background, thus enabling the employer to ensure that an ex-offender is not assigned to a work site that has security requirements.

Rules and regulations. The subtheme of rules and regulations emerged when the potential employers talked about restrictions and workforce barriers male ex-offenders face when trying to receive employment. Although the potential employers were looking for someone who would do good work, they wanted to be aware of any restrictions placed on ex-offenders due to the conditions of their release.

When asked to discuss some positions for which ex-offenders may or may not be hired, the potential employers stated that in construction trades they can work in any field unless there is a restriction based on the conditions of the ex-offender's release. For example, due to the nature of their conviction, an ex-offender may not be able to work inside homes. Other situations, such as an ex-offender being convicted of drug possession, may result in a restriction that prevents them from being on ladders, or using heavy power equipment.

E2: Again an individual being an ex-offender doesn't really make a difference to us, we just look for somebody that is going to do a good job, who is going to be fair, who is going to be on time for work and give 100%. But again because we are a union shop, there are some guidelines that the union has to follow. We have different things that we have to deal with, because we deal with EEOC. We deal with all different federal guidelines, safety, so you do have inspectors that do come out to check.

When discussing restrictions on jobs for ex-offenders and the barriers they face, one potential employer talked about the rules and regulations of the unions as being a barrier.

E2: Getting back into the role of mentoring, working with other people, dealing with rules and regulations. There are things that are beyond our control. The union shop may have regulations, which may restrict ex-offenders from certain jobs. So when they go in the union, it is a totally different criterion.

Thus, these potential employers stated that they just wanted an honest person to do the job; however, barriers may arise as a result of security issues surrounding the conditions of an ex-offenders' release from prison, or the union's rules and regulations, which must be followed in order for the company to stay in business. If the ex-offender is not able to join the union, they are not able to pay the dues that would make them eligible to receive many benefits, such as health care, life insurance, upward mobility to becoming a licensed journeyman or a master at their trade, and priority in selection for some jobs. Although union membership is not required in order to receive employment with companies in the construction trades, it does afford individuals better job security.

Mindset. The mindset subtheme emerged when potential employers were asked to discuss barriers male ex-offenders face upon entering the workforce.

E1: Well the first barrier I think is their mind-set, there's a mental barrier. Automatically they think that they're going to be scrutinized when a company finds out that they are ex-offenders and that's a strike against them. Automatically they get discouraged and sometimes before they enter into the workforce, they are totally discouraged; they assume that they are not going to get the position because even if they are qualified they are not going to get the job. Normally they have more opportunities in construction companies because they are not involved in anything where they have to worry about whether or not they have a record.

Mindset also was mentioned when one male ex-offender student participants discussed the barriers ex-offenders might face when trying to get into the workforce.

S5: I think they face the same barriers as when they are incarcerated. You have to have this certain mentality; you have to be so rough, so tough and don't take any trash from any person when you are incarcerated. But once you get out, you still have that mentality. Once you go to a job, or you are in an interview, you still have that mentality. It's like a jungle and there is no way to win, but you have to be a certain kind of way in prison, you have to stay tough and mean, but when you are on the outside that is not the case.

In summary, the potential employer stated that the ex-offenders' mindset is the first barrier that they must overcome upon entering the workforce. In order for this population to succeed in life they need to change how they think of themselves, others, and the world around them. Mindset appears to be linked in some way to the attitude subtheme that emerged in the analysis of Research Question 3; perhaps mindset is the framework for attitudes. A male ex-offender student (S5) stated that incarceration shaped their thinking, understanding, and behavior in a way that is not acceptable for transitioning into the free world and the workforce. It is this mentality that drives their thoughts, behavior, and expectations. S5 stated that ex-offenders have the same defensive mentality on a job or in an interview as they do while they are incarcerated and this is not suitable for having a productive life outside the prison walls.

Work experience. Work experience was a subtheme that emerged when the six male ex-offender students discussed their employment history before incarceration. This theme also materialized when the ex-offender students discussed their experiences associated with applying for work after they were released from incarceration.

According to responses on the demographic questionnaires, one student participant was not employed prior to incarceration, four had some type of employment, and one did not respond.

S1: Yeah, I was working construction.

S2: Yes, I am a certified film technician. I worked for Kodak. I would do the one-hour photo, where you have your film developed in an hour. We used to be inside the Target Store before Target took over the one-hour photo lab.

S3: Yeah, through a temp agency.

S6: I worked part time for this restaurant. I was like a prep chef.

The six male ex-offender participants were asked to discuss whether they had applied for jobs and if they had receive any job offers from the application(s) since reentering the free society. One had not applied for work. Of the five who had applied, three received employment and two had not.

S1: No I have not applied for any jobs since I have been out. I thought when I got released, the best thing for me because of the period of time I was incarcerated and I was lacking some skills, I would go to school and get that together. Try to do one thing at a time. Get that in order, so when I go back to my union, I can have this training to add to what I had before I got locked up.

S3: Yeah, I applied, but I haven't received a job.

S4: Yeah, but I didn't get any responses.

S2: The Safer Foundation helped me get a job working for a car lot, for a certain extent, but the job let me go. They lied to the Safer Foundation and told them I had quit, and all the time they fired me.

S5: Yes, I am certified in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, but I could not get a job in that field of work, so I just worked odd jobs here and there.

S6: Yes, I got a part time job.

In summary, the male ex-offender participants stated that not having prior work experience creates a major barrier for ex-offenders. Although four out of the six students stated that they were working in some fashion before incarceration, the jobs were either part-time, temporary or discontinued due to a change in the service provider. Out of the five ex-offender students who applied for a job after incarceration, three received some form of work, but they were not working at the beginning of this study.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question focuses on support that the case study institution can provide: How can the case study institution help ex-offender students overcome these barriers, thus facilitating entry into the workforce? The three themes that emerged from the data were connections and job placements, relationship with instructors, and life skills. The two primary data sources for this analysis were observations and interviews with the six male ex-offenders, CCCSI professionals, and the two potential employers.

Connections and Job Placement

This theme appeared when the ex-offender students were asked to discuss how the case study institution could help or was helping to assist them with moving into the workforce. The ex-offender students talked about the institution helping them with job placements and connections with unions.

S6: Well, I know that a lot of the instructors here have ties with the unions and I have seen students that have graduated and have gotten jobs. So, I know they have like connection with the unions...Going this route; it's probably the best route. You have to go to school and get certified and you know if you got a certificate, the unions give you a chance before they do someone that doesn't have one.

S2: The only way right now an ex-offender can really get a job is if he knows somebody. It's like connections.

The four CCCSI professionals stated that the institution does not treat ex-offender students any differently than other students. All of the students receive the same job placement services.

A1: The job placement comes through the Provost office, but they have the same opportunities, other than the Overhead Electrical Lineman program, as any student do in the programs.

A2: Well, we provide the same job placement services for ex-offenders that we do for all our students. We don't separate based on some category...We offer the

resume writing, we critique the resumes, we try to make sure that their objectives are clear to the contractors. If they qualify for any special funding, assistance for tools or work equipment like boots or jackets, we try to make sure that are available to them. We also take our students on work site visits. [We] have them engaged in apprenticeship directly so we can see what kinds of opportunities that is available and if that is something that they are interested in doing. We also find out if there were any specialized skills that they received while they were incarcerated...Skills that may give them more of an advantage to get employment.

SS1: We provide job placement for all our students, the institution subcontract with an agency in the community to provide job placement. Their goal is to place student in jobs period. The agency is housed here on campus.

SS2: We have employees here that help with job retention once the students have completed their programs. The employees here help the students find employment whether it be within the construction field or laborer.

During observations conducted in July 2008, it was demonstrated that CCCSI provides connections and job placements for their students, thus assisting them with transition into the workforce. As a participant observer, the researcher assisted the Apprenticeship program staff with job fairs that were sponsored by CCCSI and the community's potential employers. One job fair was held at CCCSI and another took place at a church in the neighborhood. CCCSI had companies present that were from both the private and the public sectors of the labor market. Some of the company representatives brought former CCCSI students, who are now employed with their company to serve as motivators for other ex-offenders seeking employment at the job fair.

In summary, most of the current students want to make connections within the unions and they can see that CCCSI has been successful in making these connections for former students. The institution provides visits to the different work sites for its students in order to familiarize them with the work environment before they enter the workforce.

CCCSI also provides job fairs in convenient locations for the students who have completed or are near completion of the construction programs.

Relationship with Instructors

This theme materialized when the students were asked to discuss whether the case study institution is providing them with sufficient skills to enter the workforce. Three out of the six students talked about how the relationships with their instructors helped them to stay on track and obtain the skills they needed in order to enter the workforce.

S3: Yes, [CCCSI] is helping me out for something I love to do. Well something I always wanted to do. The teacher I've got, he is going to keep you straight and to the point. He's going to make you learn.

S6: Well, my teacher is a good teacher and I am learning a lot. I've worked in carpentry before, but I am learning a lot more. I think with the certificate, I'll have a better chance of getting into the union.

S5: The instructors, they try to work with you. They try to give you the knowledge you need and they are trying to get us ready for the workforce. I think they are doing a good job.

In summary, three of the ex-offender student participants specifically stated that CCCSI instructors were providing them with the education and skills needed to get into the workforce. Each of these students seemed to mention a different characteristic they valued in their instructor: (a) discipline in expecting good results, (b) professional knowledge and teaching skills, and (c) dedication to helping the students learn. The common thread is that each of these students expressed respect for their teachers and an appreciation for the value of what they were learning.

Life Skills

This theme emerged from synthesizing the data received from observations and interviews with the male ex-offender students and CCCSI professionals. The CCCSI professionals were asked to discuss the institution's mentoring or life skill services.

SS2: To my understanding, I believe that we do. One of the employees teaches the students how to make better decisions and we have an Early Leaver's School Program that mentors students and helps them to stay in school.

A2: We do provide some life mentoring and life skill services for the students. We focus primarily on life skills, like anger management, conflict resolution, and sexual harassment, how to effectively become a journeyman through apprenticeship. We teach them about being able to keep a clean work record so that they can transition from being an apprentice to a journeyman. It is extremely important for them to know that the way they leave a job is how they build a career. In construction, it's not uncommon for an apprentice to receive a layoff, even a journeyman can get laid off. But, if they deal with some of those life skills, in the front end, by not being angry as much on the job, or creating a lot of conflict on the job, or have no record of sexual harassment on the job, and some of those life skills, then it's a high probability that the layoff would be a clean layoff with no restrictions. That would allow an individual to work for the employer again if work picks back up; it also allows them to get unemployment [benefits] which will carry a lot of tradesmen over until the season picks up, because sometimes construction is a seasonal job.

This theme also emerged when the ex-offender students discussed whether the case study institution is providing them with sufficient skills to enter the workforce and what types of assistance they consider effective for helping ex-offenders to enter the workforce. Two of the six male ex-offender students discussed life skills that are much needed and should be provided by CCCSI.

S4: Well, it really depend on the case, on the individual, I figure if they had some kind of counselor that could work with an individual with their particular problem that would be better for them to get into the workplace. Somebody who understands what they are talking about, because you can't go to a foot doctor to work on your eyes; so if you a drug addict or you are an alcoholic, you can't go the same doctors. You have to have somebody to deal with that particular need.

S5: [CCCSI] tries to work with you, they try to give you the knowledge you need and they try to prepare your dress, appearance, and mental abilities. They are trying to get us ready for the workforce I think they are doing a good job... This institution needs to continue doing what they are doing, helping me with my mental and my attitude changes. They need to not only work with me with the curriculum, but my attitude as a person as joining the world of working... Educating people, education from book knowledge in some type of trade and also education as self empowerment type of education.

During an observation this theme also emerged. In one of the classes, a mock interview session was in progress. The presenter was introduced as a potential employer looking for an individual to fill a position in his construction crew. The presenter was also giving students advice or tips about getting to an interview or job site on time. For example, he stated that if you have an interview on a Tuesday at 1:00 p.m., then you should make a dry run to the interview or work site on the same day and time to gauge the traffic and how long it takes to get to the site.

In summary, triangulation of data from the observation, ex-offender student interviews, and CCCSI professional interviews, confirms that the ex-offenders have a great need for the life skills training being offered at CCCSI. S4 talked about CCCSI needing a counselor to deal with the different issues that an ex-offender may have when attending the institution. He indicated that CCCSI needs employees who are professionally trained to assist this population with the multiple barriers they face, particularly in relation to addictions and life skills.

Research Question 5

Research Question 5 explores actions that can be taken by the case study institution to enhance the employability of ex-offender students: How can the case study institution obtain greater acceptance from employers for these graduating students who

are marginalized ex-offenders? A comparison of data from documents and interviews resulted in the identification of three themes: life skills, partnership, and screening.

Life Skills

This theme, which also arose when addressing Research Question 4, emerged when the potential employers were asked to discuss what the community colleges could do to help ex-offenders become quality employees. The aim of this question was to garner a better understanding of what the case study institution can do to obtain greater acceptance from employers for these graduating students who are ex-offenders, but also to gain broader insights into what community colleges in general might do to help their ex-offender students.

The employer participants stated that the community colleges could develop a program in which the college deals with development of both the cognitive skills necessary for critical thinking and the life skills essential for assisting ex-offender students in entering the workforce. E1 stated that the community colleges could help ex-offenders transform their thinking abilities, or the way they see themselves, thus arming them with personal attitude adjustment skills which will enable ex-offenders to enter the workforce with a positive outlook and ready to work.

E1 also stated that when community colleges initially come into contact with ex-offenders, the colleges should strive to understand how populations of ex-offender students view the world, and how they see themselves fitting into the world. These insights will enable the community colleges to better understand this population of students and develop programs that will effectively assist them in entering the workforce. E2 concurred with E1 that the community colleges could adopt life skills programs

similar to the programs at CCCSI, such as job fairs, personal appearance workshops, filling out applications, and having connections with a bank of companies that will enable ex-offenders to enhance their resumes. This bank of companies could provide the ex-offender students with apprentice opportunities as well as internships. The employers' recommendations seemed to be an endorsement for the effectiveness of life skills programs currently offered by CCCSI.

Partnership

This theme emerged when the two potential employers were asked what employers could do in cooperation with the community colleges to help ex-offenders develop the skills and dispositions needed to successfully transition into the workforce. E1 suggested that a dedicated college staff member could seek out and maintain cooperative relationships with employers who would agree to designate some jobs for ex-offenders. The college's staff member might also check on the ex-offenders periodically to identify and resolve problems. This partnership between the employer and the college could be called a covenant program.

E1: If the community colleges have a cooperation that they are partners with and agree to work with an ex-offender along with a covenant program, that allow the cooperation to provide the jobs and the community colleges to provide the skills. The community colleges also need to put someone on board who is going to work with the ex-offenders and the partnerships. This person, whoever they are, will go into the work environment and get the cooperation to commit to setting aside a certain amount of jobs for ex-offenders. This process will give the ex-offenders opportunities that they would not normally have.

E2 suggested that the community colleges, in cooperation with employers, could invite employers to the colleges to teach small segments of the programs. This educational approach would help ex-offender students in learning specialized components of the program that specifically deal with current practices.

E2: What we could do is we could partner up and that means allow someone like me to come into the classrooms to teach short segments of the program. This really gives them (ex-offender students) a defined course of study as opposed to an overall general course of study. I am not concerned with the overall program; I just want that one little section, that's roofing. So it would be good to partner with companies to come in and do training on site that would be really neat.

Screening

The screening theme emerged when CCCSI professionals were asked to describe the procedure for navigating ex-offender students away from restricted programs that would prevent them from receiving related employment. The institution's primary screening begins with the college advisors or A2, who is the employment representative, but if a student does not reveal their criminal background, the student may not receive the information they need.

SS1: We do not know if a student is an ex-offender unless they identify themselves...A person could come in off the street and register for a program and if they never identify themselves as an ex-offender, we would never know.

A2: My job primarily is to do one on one consultation with the students prior to referral to a job. So, I have to sit the student down when I have been asked by a contractor to supply names of individuals that may have this particular training or skill set. Once the student and I meet, I delve a little bit into their personal history. I ask them questions about their background. I ask them if they were convicted, what kind of probationary restrictions that they deal with right now. When they fill out their applications for jobs, I try to encourage them not to hide their convictions. I advise them to disclose that particular information, but leave room for explanations upon a second interview. That gives the ex-offender students a chance to really explain circumstances of conviction, and in some cases people come with convictions that are longer than seven years...For example, if a person is trying to become a carpentry apprentice, and a carpentry contractor has an opportunity to employ this person, he may have a criminal background of a sex offender, where they have to register with the state and city government, then that student would not be referred to that contractor, if the contractor has a contract working around a school or some children. Because that's automatically setting them up for failure, so we try to find out what the circumstances are and guide them to something that may work for them. If a contractor is working at O'Hare Field, for example, and the ex-offender student is trying to get a job working on the expansion of the airport, but Homeland Security has certain security restrictions for ex-offenders on the air side of the construction project, then we

want to make sure that the contractors know about this particular student, that he is limited to working on the land side of the project. So we try to make sure the contractors, as well as students, are a good match. We try not to set our students up for failure when they are trying to get into the industry.

The screening theme also was evident in documents used by CCCSI, which revealed that the institution is required to do random drug and alcohol testing on all students before enrollment and upon completion of the programs, before they are referred to contractors. This exit procedure helps CCCSI to produce an employable graduate, and to maintain its good reputation among potential employers.

In summary, analysis of data related to Research Question 5 resulted in three primary suggestions from potential employers. First, community colleges could offer more programs that deal with ex-offender students' cognitive skills because these skills are needed for critical thinking and attitude adjustments. Second, potential employers thought it essential for ex-offenders to receive life skills workshops to assist them with their entry into the workforce. Third, a covenant program or partnership could be established between community colleges, community businesses, and students to ensure that the students have bridges that would help them with transitioning into the workforce.

Although CCCSI provides screening and advisement to students before beginning their program, only if the ex-offender students inform the college advisors or job placement staff of their criminal background are they advised about programs that would and would not violate the conditions of their parole. A second point at which screening occurs is in job assignments. The CCCSI professional staff works with contractors in screening the students to ensure that ex-offenders are not placed on work sites that would violate their parole.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher used content analysis, which allowed the comparison of data from documents, demographic questionnaires, field notes, observations, and individual interview transcriptions to build themes through analytic induction that enabled a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest. There were several themes that emerged within each of the five research questions. Four main findings related to identifying the barriers male ex-offenders encounter in their efforts to join the workforce were lack of education, pressures leading to recidivism, marginalization resulting from a criminal background, and harboring a negative mindset. The findings that emerged regarding the types of support services that CCCSI, and potentially other community colleges could provide for male ex-offender students to assist them with entry into workforce were in three areas: (a) screening by advisors prior to entering a program, and by CCCSI professionals in cooperation with employers before being assigned to potentially restrictive job sites; (b) training and practice in life skills that facilitate hiring and job retention; and (c) connections established by CCCSI faculty, staff and administrators with employers and union representatives, as well as providing job placement services. In the next chapter, the research findings will be further analyzed and discussed.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with an overview of the research study and a discussion of the findings as viewed through the lens of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It then presents conclusions based on the findings and themes from the literature. The third section offers recommendations for the case study community college, policy makers, and future research. In closing, the chapter provides a brief final summary for the study.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore (a) barriers that male ex-offenders encounter in their pursuit of entering the workforce, and (b) various types of education and support services that community colleges could provide in order to assist this marginalized population in overcoming these barriers, and accomplishing entry into the workforce.

Five research questions guided the study:

1. How do correctional institutions prepare male inmates for entry into the workforce?
2. What types of programs are offered by the case study institution to assist male ex-offenders into the workforce?
3. What types of barriers do male ex-offenders face in seeking employment?
4. How can the case study institution help ex-offender students overcome the barriers, thus facilitating entry into the workforce?
5. How can the case study institution obtain greater acceptance from employers for these graduating students who are marginalized ex-offenders?

The case study institution, referred to as Community College Case Study Institution (CCCSI), is a community college located in an urban area of Illinois that has programs in construction technology. The desirability and availability of the programs it offers has resulted in the enrollment of ex-offenders now comprising 50% of its student body. Interviews were conducted with six male ex-offenders who are CCCSI students or former students to garner an understanding of the barriers they encounter when attempting to enter the workforce and their experiences at the community college. Four CCCSI professionals were selected as participants and interviewed based on their professional knowledge of the institution and their work experience with ex-offenders. CCCSI referred the researcher to two potential employers who were interviewed based on their knowledge of the barriers male ex-offenders encounter and their experience with this community college.

To enhance the validity of this study, the researcher reviewed, compared, contrasted, analyzed, and synthesized multiple sources of data. Data sources used to triangulate the study's findings were interviews, observations, documents, demographic questionnaires, and field notes.

Discussion

When analyzing the data sources many themes emerged, but four main themes related to the barriers ex-offender students encounter in their pursuit of entering the workforce were: (a) lack of education, (b) recidivism, (c) criminal background, and (d) mindset. Also, three main themes were identified concerning the different types of educational and support services that CCCSI, and potentially other community colleges,

could provide for ex-offenders to assist them with entry into the workforce: (a) screening, (b) life skills, and (c) connection and job placement.

Lack of Education

The Illinois Department of Correction Web site indicates that the correctional facilities link education with reducing recidivism. Yet, in 2001, Illinois cut 5.4 million dollars from the state budget that had been allocated for higher education in prisons, and thereby directly affected 60% of those incarcerated (Gottschalk, 2006). Moreover, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 contains a provision that denies the allocation of federal Pell Grant dollars to inmates (Batiuk, et al., 2005). While this bill does not deny college programming to inmates, few prisoners have the financial resources to pay for college classes. Thus, decreased funding and legislative restrictions have resulted in limiting educational and training opportunities for ex-offenders during incarceration. However, some of the Illinois Department of Correction facilities do have partnerships with local school districts and community colleges to provide educational and vocational skills training to inmates.

Of the six male ex-offender student participants, two received a GED and one, who already had a high school diploma, went to GED classes because there was nothing else for him to do while incarcerated. One participant received several types of vocational skills training while incarcerated, but he stated that guards were teaching some of the programs and this resulted in reducing the quality and effectiveness of the educational training offered. Due to the instructors' dual roles as guards and educators, the inmates did not know how to engage with these individuals and the guards often did not have

teaching experience. Two participants did not receive any type of education or vocational training while they were inmates.

Lack of education was also identified as a barrier by the case study institution's professional staff; it is an impediment to gaining access to training programs, as well as employment. A CCCSI professional stated that the male ex-offender students often enter the institution without the basic reading and math scores needed for admission to the construction programs. This finding is consistent with Mckean and Ransford's (2004) statement that when released, most male ex-offenders have low educational achievement and lack the basic skills necessary for employment in the workforce.

An implication of the study's findings is that prison programs offered by community colleges and other educational institutions are likely to improve the release experience for ex-offenders by helping them to qualify for educational programs, such as those offered by CCCSI, and lowering employment barriers, thus reducing the recidivism rate. Moreover, a particular need area may be in providing remedial classes to inmates who have an interest in further education and training, but would not qualify based on a selected screening instrument (e.g., Compass).

Recidivism

Recidivism was a subtheme that emerged under the category of personal barriers. According to Solomon et al. (2004), significant numbers of ex-offenders reenter small clusters of communities already burdened with high poverty and unemployment rates. It is important for the ex-offenders released from incarceration to reestablish themselves in their neighborhoods, but the receiving communities are ill prepared to foster a positive reentry (Solomon et al.).

Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs theory is represented by a pyramid with five rungs in an ascending model: (a) physiological need (basic need), (b) safety, (c) love/belonging, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization. He explained that humans must satisfy one level of need before they can move on to the next level. In relation to ex-offenders, they are unlikely to ascend up the pyramid of needs when they are released into communities plagued by poverty and unemployment. Therefore, ex-offenders continue to struggle within the first three rungs of the pyramid; they are driven to seek satisfaction of their needs for physiological well-being, safety, and belongingness/love.

An implication of Maslow's theory and the study's findings is that CCCSI should partner with social agencies to assist their ex-offender students with support services directed at fulfilling the first four rungs in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. If CCCSI takes this approach, there exists an opportunity to provide the students in this marginalized population with direction, support, education/training, and connections that may assist them in achieving self-actualization, thus stemming the flow of recidivism.

Criminal Background

Prominent within the workforce barriers category was the criminal background subtheme. Four out of the six students felt that having a criminal background was a barrier that hindered male ex-offenders from getting into the workforce. They asserted that companies do not want to hire ex-offenders because of their convictions. Thus, the male ex-offenders face barriers that are elevated due to the stigma of incarceration and it becomes increasingly difficult for them to achieve a sense of safety and security.

According to Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs theory, it is imperative for structure to be built into the lives of people in general. He further argues that achieving

job security, living in a safe environment, and being able to meet basic needs helps to alleviate anxieties. Thus, the ex-offenders' ability to satisfy their needs for safety and security may hinge on gaining employment that supports a better standard of living. Yet, the ex-offenders are marginalized in two ways: (a) by employers who will not hire someone who has a criminal background and (b) by the ex-offenders' generalized perception that no employer will hire them because of their background.

For CCCSI, these findings highlight the importance of developing and maintaining partnerships with businesses in the communities and providing programs that will enable ex-offenders to receive sustainable employment consistent with the conditions of their release. Moreover, the insights gained from using Maslow's Hierarchy of needs as an analytical lens for understanding the criminal background subtheme could help to inform further development of life skills training at CCCSI.

Mindset

Another major barrier that was reported by the ex-offenders, CCCSI professionals, and potential employers was mindset. The potential employers stated that the ex-offenders' mindset is the first major barrier that they must overcome to enter the workforce. In order for this population to succeed in life they need to change how they think of themselves, others, and the world around them.

Maslow (1970) stated that the third rung of his Hierarchy of Needs theory involves the need for love and belonging that usually emerge when physiological, safety, and security needs are met. Maslow also maintained that these needs drive humans to seek friendships, form relationships, and be a part of a community. However, if these needs for acceptance are not met in a positive way, the individuals may become alienated,

and this hinders them from becoming part of a constructive group. When an ex-offender has a negative mindset, he is likely to join a group that may include those who were formerly incarcerated, or perhaps a gang. This potentiality is further reinforced when marginalized ex-offenders are not equipped with the skills and training needed to reverse negative influences, attitudes, and beliefs. The adverse effects of a negative mindset include a sense of isolation and alienation that hinder ex-offenders from entering the labor market.

For CCCSI, these findings point to the importance of understanding and establishing approaches for dealing with the way student ex-offenders think of themselves, others, and the world around them. Support services aimed at providing positive intervention may lead ex-offender students to seek opportunities that could reverse negative influences, attitudes, and beliefs. Thus, attending to the ex-offender students' mindset also may help to reduce the potential for recidivism.

Life Skills

The life skills theme emerged in interviews with the ex-offender students, CCCSI professionals, and potential employers. According to Maslow (1970), the need for self-actualization motivates human beings to elevate themselves to other levels in the hierarchy by exploring their potential to be all that they can be. Although, he thought this fifth level at the top of the needs pyramid was important, Maslow recognized that most people never reach it. Maslow also realized that this level is unique to each person and the way that they find appreciation, self-sufficiencies, truth, and other approaches to self-actualization. Many possibilities may exist if ex-offenders are able to overcome barriers to employment. Perhaps the achievement of employment in a skilled area that pays well

and is socially acceptable could be construed, or seen as a form of self-actualization for ex-offenders.

Life skills are required to maneuver through many structures including family, neighborhoods within communities and the job market (Fahey et al., 2006). Life skills, as described by the North Lawndale Employment Network (2009), are time management, overcoming a poor self-concept, coping with stress, and revising beliefs for a positive outcome. Life skills are important for ex-offenders in their pursuit of stability in the free society (Rakis, 2005). If CSCC addresses the need for life skills by integrating related training across the program curriculum, this will help ex-offenders, and perhaps other students, to gain greater acceptance from potential employers (a job) and current employers (retention).

Connections and Job Placement

Connections and job placement emerged as a major theme that male ex-offenders discussed when they were asked what CCCSI could do to assist them in gaining entry into the workforce. Jenkins and Fitzgerald (1998) suggest that community colleges should develop partnerships with service agencies, community based organizations, trade affiliations, and linkages to employers to assist ex-offenders with entry into the workforce. They also acknowledge that marginalized students need much guidance, support, and continued monitoring if they are to be successful. Maslow (1970) asserts in the fourth rung of his theory that the need for esteem elevates the importance of being respected and recognized for achievements by others. However, he posits it is more important for a human being to look at self, and have positive thoughts and feelings of self-esteem. At CCCSI, it was crucial that ex-offender students be given the opportunity

to witness the success of two of their “own.” These successfully employed ex-offender former students served as an inspiration to motivate other ex-offenders who were seeking employment.

For CCCSI, these findings suggest that the institution should continue in its efforts to create partnerships that provide ex-offender students with guidance, support, and continued monitoring in order to gain employment and membership in various trade unions. In addition, former ex-offender students who can serve as role models should be asked to visit CCCSI, speak with interested students and accompany potential employers at CCCSI-employer sponsored job fairs.

Conclusions

According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, human beings are fundamentally motivated to satisfy their physiological requirements for survival. Key to meeting physiological needs for food and shelter is employment, and finding employment can be challenging for anyone, but as discussed in this research study the barriers faced by ex-offenders are much higher. Most ex-offenders reenter open society as poorly educated people who are without a history of employment and essential vocational skills (Bushway, 2003). Although the prison experience could be made more productive through courses and training in an environment that by its nature minimizes distractions from alternative activities, reduced funding and lack of qualified instructors are problematic. Policy makers could help to address these problems by targeting funding and offering grant programs for community colleges to create partnerships with correctional departments.

Preparation to enter the workforce is essential for ex-offenders who are returning to their communities, reuniting with their families, and seeking employment. Because this population has few skills and insufficient education, it is reasoned that these factors contribute to the tough cycle of recidivism (Solomon et al., 2004). There is no single universal remedy to eliminate barriers that ex-offenders face. Yet, the literature indicates that education has a direct connection to employment for ex-offenders (Raphael & Weiman, 2005).

Challenges facing institutions today, such as increasing enrollments, growing diversity in the population of students, renewed demand for workforce development, and limited funding have caused community colleges to rethink their mission of addressing the educational needs of the communities they serve (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Ex-offenders are one of the growing, diverse populations that arrive on the community college campus with complex issues. These ex-offenders are often considered to be a non-trusted population within communities, thus they are critically in need of comprehensive services. A large number of ex-offenders are reentering communities at an alarming rate. The community colleges will need to find ways of assisting ex-offender students through education and training that will create pathways into the workforce. The local, state, and national policy makers need to understand that education and training for inmates and ex-offenders can contribute to reduced recidivism. They also need to comprehend the important role that community colleges can fulfill, if these institutions are provided with sufficient, targeted funding resources (Henderson, 2005; Golembeski & Fullilove, 2005).

Recommendations

In this section, recommendations are provided for (a) the case study institution and potentially other community colleges, (b) policy makers, and (c) future researchers. The recommendations for CCCSI may be useful to other community colleges that have ex-offender students.

Case Study Community College

- Employ professional counselors who are qualified to assess the individual needs of ex-offenders, address issues regarding ex-offenders, or refer ex-offenders to other professionals, institutions or peer groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Drug Abuse Centers, for assistance with various social challenges related to incarceration, behavioral, and mental issues.
- Implement a screening process that will allow community college advisors to inquire about criminal history as a means to guide ex-offenders into fields of study that will better position them for receiving employment, as well as comply with their terms of release.
- Incorporate life skills across the curriculum to address the beliefs, attitudes, critical thinking, and decision making skills of ex-offenders, and ensure that these skills are woven into every segment of the vocational programs.
- Create a system of covenant partnerships that encompass ex-offender students, community college employees, and potential employers to gain greater acceptance from the employers and provide ex-offenders with a support network for retention in the workforce.

Policy Makers

- Change the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which denies Pell Grants to inmates who were incarcerated for nonviolent crimes.
- Change Question 31 on the financial aid form, which asks if the applicant has been convicted for the possession or selling of illegal drugs while receiving financial aid. This question leads to an unreasonable disparity of treatment among violent and non-violent criminals; for example, if a person was convicted of homicide, or is a serial killer, they would not have to answer Question 31 and therefore could get financial aid.

Suggestion for Future Research

The findings of this study showed that the ex-offender students, CCCSI professionals, and potential employers all thought that life skills training should be considered a curriculum component that is essential for ex-offenders to successfully enter and stay in the workforce. Therefore, future research should be conducted on life skills training programs, the incorporation of these skills into community college curriculum, and the affect these programs have on employment access and retention for male ex-offenders.

Another topic for future research would be to evaluate the effectiveness of screening procedures and advising processes used to help ex-offenders navigate through the registration process prior to enrollment in educational or training programs at community colleges. Measures of effectiveness might be retention, completion, and student ex-offenders' experiences as they attempt to enter the job market. By effectively

addressing the screening and advising processes, the community colleges may gain greater acceptance from potential employers for the graduating ex-offender students.

Summary

In summary, there is no single universal remedy to eliminate barriers that ex-offenders encounter when they enter the free society. Although the literature indicates that education has a direct connection to employment for ex-offenders, the data gathered for this study showed that life skills to gain and retain a job, and a screening process ensuring that students are enrolled in a viable training program also were major components needed to assist this population in a community college setting.

The community college mission includes identifying and responding to the educational needs of adult learners (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). In 2010, an estimated 1.2 million adult prisoners will be released from correctional facilities into communities in the U.S (Henderson, 2005). Community colleges with their open admissions policy and strong certificate programs are in a position, if given sufficient funding, to address the ex-offender's barriers to employment. Understanding the problems and developing effective interventions can assist this population of students to find employment and stay employed, thus reducing recidivism, along with its high human and socio-economic costs.

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APPENDIX A

Unlocking Doors for the Locked-Out: How Can Community Colleges Help to Demolish Barriers, Build Bridges, and Transition Ex-offenders into the Workforce

Demographic Questionnaire for Ex-Offender Research Participants

Date: _____

1. Age _____
2. Ethnicity:
 - Asian or Pacific Islander _____
 - American Indian or Alaskan _____
 - Black, non-Hispanic _____
 - Hispanic _____
 - White, non-Hispanic _____
3. Life/Family and Support Situation
 - A. Married _____
 - Single _____
 - Divorced _____
 - Significant Other _____
 - B. What type of family support did you receive upon release?
Please explain.
 - C. Did you receive any other support services, other than family?
Please explain.
4. When were you released from incarceration?

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Ex-Offender Student Participants

1. Incarceration
 - A. Have you been incarcerated or convicted of a felony before your previous conviction?
Please explain.
 - B. How long have you been released?
 - C. Have other members of your immediate family ever been incarcerated?
Please explain.
 - D. Did you receive any education or training while incarcerated?
Please explain.
2. Were you employed before your conviction?
Please explain.
3. What is your educational level?
Please explain.
4. Do you think this community college is providing you with sufficient skills to enter the workforce?
Please explain.
5. How could the community colleges assist you with reentry into the workforce?
Please explain.
6. Do you think employers are reluctant to hire ex-offenders?
Please explain.
7. Do you think there is a direct link between unemployment and recidivism?
Please explain.
8. What types of assist do you consider effective for ex-offenders to enter into the labor market or workforce?
Please explain.
9. Have you applied for any jobs before or after release? Did you receive any job offers from the application(s)?
Please explain.

10. What barriers do you think ex-offenders may face when trying to get into the workforce?
Please explain.
11. What program are you currently enrolled in at the community college you attend?
12. Are you restricted from certain jobs because of your conviction?
Please explain.

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for the Case Study Institution Employee Participants

1. Department _____
2. Position _____
3. What kind of services does your institution provide for ex-offenders?
Please explain.
4. Does your institution provide any mentoring or life skill services for ex-offenders?
Please explain.
5. What are some of the identifiable barriers ex-offenders face upon entering your institution?
Please explain.
6. Does your institution make an effort to include or recruit ex-offenders?
Please explain.
7. Does your institution provide special assistance in the enrollment process to guide ex-offenders from fields of study that bar them from receiving gainful employment?
Please explain.
8. How does your institution know if they are placing an ex-offender in a restricted program that would violate the condition of their release?
Please explain.
9. What kind of job placement services does your institution provide for ex-offenders?
Please explain.
10. Does your institution track the progress or success of your students who are ex-offenders?
Please explain.

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions for Employer Participants

1. Type of Company _____
2. Position at the company _____
3. Does your company ask if potential employees are ex-offenders?
Please explain.
4. Does your company hire ex-offenders?
Please explain.
5. Does your company do criminal background checks?
Please explain.
6. What barriers do ex-offenders face upon entering the workforce?
Please explain.
7. Are there certain types of positions for which you might or might not consider hiring an ex-offender?
Please explain.
8. What can the community colleges do to help ex-offenders to become quality employees?
Please explain.
9. What could employers do in cooperation with the community college to help ex-offenders develop the skills and dispositions needed to successfully transition into the workforce?
Please explain.

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - Case Study Institution Employee Participants

This consent form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this qualitative case study that will take place from February 2008 to May 2009.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Jeannette Molden, a doctoral student at National Louis University located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand that this study is entitled *Unlocking Doors for the Locked-Out: How Can Community Colleges Help to Demolish Barriers, Build Bridges, and Transition Ex-offenders into the Workforce*. The purpose of this study has two components: (a) to explore barriers that male ex-offenders encounter in their pursuit of reentering the workforce, and (b) to identify the types of education and support services community colleges could provide in order to assist this marginalized population to overcome these barriers and accomplish reentry.

I understand that my participation will consist of an interview lasting 1-2 hours in length with a possible second, follow-up interview lasting 1-2 hours in length. I understand that I will receive a copy of my transcribed interview to verify and clarify the information.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and there are no anticipated risks or benefits to me associated with the research, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be of benefit to ex-offenders, community colleges, and business institutions.

I understand that I can withdraw at any time without prejudice until the completion of the dissertation.

I understand that only the researcher, Jeannette Molden, will have access to a secured file cabinet containing all transcripts, tape recordings, and field notes from the interview(s) in which I participated.

I understand that the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, but my identity will in no way be revealed.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher: Jeannette Molden, 3901 South State Street, Chicago, Illinois 60609, (773) 451-2016, or Email address: jmolden@ccc.edu

I have been informed that if I have any concerns or questions before or during participation that I feel have not been addressed by Jeannette Molden, I may contact her Primary Advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. Diane Oliver, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603, (312) 261-3728; Email address: diane.oliver@nl.edu.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - Ex-Offender Participants

This consent form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this qualitative case study that will take place from February 2008 to May 2009.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Jeannette Molden, a doctoral student at National Louis University located in Chicago, Illinois.

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Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - Industry Participants

This consent form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this qualitative case study that will take place from February 2008 to May 2009.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Jeannette Molden, a doctoral student at National Louis University located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand that this study is entitled *Unlocking Doors for the Locked-Out: How Can Community Colleges Help to Demolish Barriers, Build Bridges, and Transition Ex-offenders into the Workforce*. The purpose of this study has two components: (a) to explore barriers that male ex-offenders encounter in their pursuit of reentering the workforce, and (b) to identify the types of education and support services community colleges could provide in order to assist this marginalized population to overcome these barriers and accomplish reentry.

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Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____