

UNDERSTANDING RECIDIVISM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF REPEAT
OFFENDERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES UNDER PLACER COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
PROBATION SUPERVISION

by

Andrew Stephenson Beasley

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of repeat offenders under probation supervision within Placer County, California. The hierarchy of needs theory provided the theoretical framework for the study. The central research question was: What are the lived experiences of the repeat offenders under Placer County, California probation supervision? The three guiding questions asked the following: 1) How do offenders describe their lived experiences as a repeat offender? 2) How do offenders describe the support or lack of support from correctional intervention? 3) How do participants perceive the challenges experienced after being released back to the community? Criterion sampling was used to recruit ten repeat offenders within Placer County for this study. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and reflexive memos. The data was coded utilizing NVivo 12 Plus to complete a thematic analysis. Three primary themes emerged from the data: 1) correctional environment, 2) reintegration into society, and 3) follow-up when released. The findings revealed that the repeat offenders struggled to provide for their basic needs when released from custody. The implications of the study's findings, delimitations and limitations, and recommendations for future research will also be discussed.

Keywords: recidivism, education, inmate programming, probation, correctional success.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Corrections in the United States has three main goals: to incapacitate offenders, deter offenders from committing additional offenses, and punish those who have committed offenses (Stohr & Walsh, 2019). Although these were identified as the three goals of corrections, the one crucial emphasis of corrections should be to correct the offenders' behavior and prevent them from committing future offenses. Unfortunately, many offenders who served time in correctional institutions did not have the resources to succeed when released back into society, which caused nearly 66% of them to return to the life of crime and return to custody (Bird et al., 2019). This return to custody is also known as recidivism.

The high percentage of recidivism has become a crisis in correctional institutions in the United States because of massive overcrowding. There were approximately 2.2 million prisoners incarcerated and another 5 million on community supervision (Cullen & Jonson, 2017). To address overcrowding in correctional institutions, many correctional institutions across the country have provided correctional programming to offenders while they were in custody to help them become contributing members of society when released, also known as educational programming. When correctional institutions invested additional money into inmate education programming, it saved them five times the amount of money over three years (Davis et al., 2014).

In addition to educational programming, policymakers have attempted to reduce recidivism through various avenues. One solution to reduce recidivism in California was to reduce the inmate population with Proposition 47 (Bird et al., 2018). Proposition 47 was passed in 2011 and changed the classification of many offenses once considered felonies, punishable by

state prison terms, to misdemeanors where the offender only receives a citation (Bird et al., 2018). For example, check fraud, drug possession, and receiving stolen property were all reclassified from felonies to misdemeanors (Bird et al., 2018). These offenses are examples of low-level offenses that may be deemed appropriate to provide offenders with educational programming while in custody to prevent them from reoffending when released into society. However, because of Prop 47, many district attorneys across the state no longer prosecute these crimes, making the crimes unpunished and leading to fewer possible inmates instead of focusing on re-education (Casiano, 2020). This decriminalization of crimes has not changed California's recidivism rate of criminality, but rather it has changed the offenses that can be punished by state prison terms. Although Proposition 47 was to reduce recidivism in California, the result has reduced crime classifications without addressing the root problem of recidivism, correcting the offenders' behavior.

Although reclassifying low-level crimes was one way the State of California has reduced the inmate population, it did not improve recidivism or correctional success. Instead, these efforts have changed the classification of many crimes to a lower category (Chavira et al., 2016). Additionally, many offenders once on state parole were placed on Post Release Community Supervision (PRCS). After these offenders are placed on PRCS, they could not be rearrested for many of the same technical violations they could have when they were on state parole (Ball, 2016). These efforts should be changed by keeping offense classifications the same but improving the delivery method for offender educational programming with their feedback while in custody to help the offenders correct their behavior and enhance correctional success.

There were many different tools identified to measure institutional success and predict ways to provide offenders programming while in custody; however, many of these

measurements were quantitative and do not collect rich data directly from the offenders involved in the process. These tools have repeatedly failed to correct the behavior of the offenders but instead placed a quick fix on a broken correctional system with high recidivism. The same system constantly placed offenders in custody with standardized programming efforts and pushed these same offenders back into society in hopes they will not go back to the life of crime and re-offend.

This study explored the lived experiences of repeat offenders under probation supervision in Placer County, California. The problem explored why low-level offenders recidivate when released from custody and how corrections can improve programming to increase their likelihood of success when they are released. Many low-level offenders released from custody, return to custody after committing a new offense. This revolving door has caused a high recidivism rate and an overpopulated corrections system in California. As a result, there was a push to reduce the penalty for many offenses, such as those determined by the state as non-serious or non-violent offenses (Chavira et al., 2016). Unfortunately, this reclassification has not corrected the behavior of offenders in California, instead changed the way crimes are handled when identified.

The focus of this research was to understand low-level offenders' experience with recidivism and how participation in programming did or did not prevent recidivism. Recidivism was a significant challenge for low-level offenders, mainly when they had limited resources to help them achieve success when released from custody. Bird et al. (2019) found that approximately two-thirds of prisoners released from California State prisons after completing their sentence were rearrested within three years and return to prison. The first consideration of the impact of this alarmingly high recidivism rate was the cost of keeping the offender in

custody, which was just over an estimated \$81,000 annually at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2019). These statistics may be different throughout the state at each county jail. However, these statistics were used as a starting point for cost savings when determining how much the state would save by rehabilitating offenders and helping them become productive members of society upon their release from custody.

Background

California has struggled with the large volume of offenders in custody, rising from just over 37,000 offenders in state prisons in 1984 to over 177,000 in 2005 (Schlanger, 2013). The war on drugs, the three strikes law, and the Uniform Determinate Sentencing Act have all contributed to the overcrowding problem in California (Chavira et al., 2016). The overcrowding in California has resulted in two class-action lawsuits because of inadequate medical and mental care for the offenders (Chavira et al., 2016). Additionally, in 2013 a panel of three Federal court judges ordered the State of California to immediately release offenders to comply with a previous 2009 federal court order to reduce the prison population by almost 138% (Stanton & Walsh, 2013). Due to the continuous overcrowding within correctional institutions, California voters approved Proposition 47, which changed three significant parts of California's criminal justice system (Chavira et al., 2016). All three significant changes mandated county correctional systems to house and supervise many offenders once housed within a California State prison and managed by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation parole officers upon release from custody (Chavira et al., 2016). As a result of these significant changes in California's corrections system, county correctional facilities are tasked with housing offenders

for more extended periods and provide services that were once mainly focused on the State prison system (Schlanger, 2013).

Measuring Recidivism in California

More than 2 million adults were incarcerated in correctional institutions in the United States, and over 700,000 offenders were released into the communities every year (Davis, 2016). Studies have shown almost a two-thirds recidivism rate in California, and the primary tool used to determine offenders' recidivism rate was the three-year return-to-prison rate (Bird et al., 2019). However, the measurement of recidivism in California was difficult to compare to other states because many offenses no longer result in incarceration (Bird et al., 2019). As a result of this change, the measurement used in this study to determine recidivism was the three-year reconviction rate rather than a return to prison rate. Although recidivism was a measure to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy change, the policy change also impacted policing strategies, such as reduced drug possession enforcement (Bird et al., 2019). As a result, recidivism needs to be analyzed from a different perspective keeping in mind the various policy changes in the criminal justice system, which have affected the number of offenders who have modified their behavior.

The Level of Service Inventory-Revised

When criminal justice organizations predict the likelihood of an offender's success when released from custody, one measurement method is called the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R). Specifically, the LSI-R was a quantitative assessment method criminal justice professionals used to classify offenders in the community and correctional settings (Reisig et al., 2006). Additionally, the offender was evaluated on 54 different "risk-need" items to determine the likelihood of re-offending when released (Reisig et al., 2006). The various risk-need items

were divided into risk factors and protective factors (Powers et al., 2018). Within the risk factors for reoffending, education was the second-highest risk factor considered through the LSI-R (Powers et al., 2018). Through their research, Powers et al. (2018) also found that absconders had fewer years of education than those offenders who completed probation. Considering this additional factor makes it essential to improve education in correctional institutions and look at ways to meet the offender's specific needs from their perspective. Overall, significant evidence has shown that the LSI-R is a reliable method of determining correctional outcomes' predictability (Flores et al., 2006).

One of the approaches to reduce the inmate population was to provide education programs to offenders while they were in custody to increase their LSI-R score and ultimately reduce the likelihood they will re-offend. LSI-R was only one way to evaluate the offenders' likelihood of reoffending quantitatively; however, the LSI-R did not provide an in-depth, qualitative understanding to further improve the chance of success from an offender's perspective.

Another factor in measuring the likelihood of an offender's success when released from custody was the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR). The RNR method evaluates which services offenders need while in custody to improve their success when released into society (Drawbridge et al., 2020). The RNR process was used to address the assessment's seven topics: family circumstances, education/employment, peer relations, substance abuse, leisure/ recreation, personality/ behavior, and attitudes/ orientation (Drawbridge et al., 2019). For example, one way to meet the specific criminogenic need for education through the RNR evaluation was to provide offenders with adult education or a high school equivalency diploma (Drawbridge et al., 2020). While the RNR was an excellent way to determine which programs and services offenders need

while in custody, it did not look at specific ways to implement them from the offenders' perspectives.

Bozick et al. (2018) found through their research that offenders who participated in inmate education programs were 28% less likely to re-offend when released from custody. Additionally, they found that offenders who participated in inmate education programs were 12% more likely to obtain post-release employment than those who chose not to participate in inmate education programs. Given the success rates of educational programs in reducing recidivism, there needs to be more firsthand qualitative research directly from participants to understand better how education programs support low-level offenders' successful integration into society.

The LSI-R and the RNR were different quantitative ways to establish the needs for individual offenders; the recidivism rate is still high. These tools can help identify offenders' needs as they navigate the correctional system. However, there still needs to be additional information from the offenders' points of view to improve the implementation of programming. This information will ensure there is no standardized method of implementing programming; instead, the programming will meet the offender's individual needs.

Situation to Self

Having worked in the criminal justice profession for almost 25 years, I have seen firsthand the impact of California's criminal justice policies. Some effects include a law enforcement officer's ability to take action for certain offenses and the enforcement action limitations due to the law's changes. For example, when I first started studying to work in California in 2002, possession of a controlled substance was a felony, and the officer would immediately take the offender into custody. However, over time, the decriminalization of drug

crimes has forced officers to give these offenders a citation unless they meet certain conditions. In addition, decriminalizing these crimes has created a nonchalant attitude among officers when they face offenders with controlled substances. My motivation for conducting this research was to identify better ways to correct the offenders' behavior instead of decriminalizing offenses. Additionally, I brought an axiological philosophical assumption that if offenders can increase their perspective of their value, it will help them seek opportunities for success when released from custody. Lastly, the pragmatism paradigm guided the study to show that implementing programming designed to meet offenders' needs can improve offenders' successful reintegration into society when released from custody.

Problem Statement

The problem was to address the high levels of recidivism amongst repeat offenders under probation supervision in Placer County, California. The current correctional programs in California, specifically in Placer County, provide offenders standardized programs while in custody. As a result of the standardization, many of the offenders did not participate in these programs. Incarcerating low-level offenders is an expensive part of California's criminal justice system (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2019). The high rate of low-level offenders' recidivism impacts many parts of the criminal justice system. One impact was the high cost of housing one inmate in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, at just over \$81,000 per year per inmate (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2019). Additionally, the recidivism rate for offenders in California was approximately 66% for felony offenders rearrested within two years after their release (Bird, Goss, & Nguyen, 2019). As a result of the high costs and high recidivism rates, the State of California has spent a lot of money on the same offenders as they recidivate and reenter the criminal justice system over and over.

One way to address this problem was to invest in correctional education programs to provide offenders with tools for success when released from custody. One study found that every dollar invested into correctional education programs saved five dollars over three years (Davis, 2016). However, it was also essential to identify the offenders' specific needs instead of developing a standardized program for all to participate in (Reese, 2017). One idea was the Prison Education Project, a well-rounded education program that helped each offender's specific needs, such as reading, tutoring, math, and assisting Spanish speakers in learning to speak English (Reese, 2017). Therefore, investing additional money and time into offenders' programming and education can reduce recidivism. However, the consequences of not investing in educational programs can be detrimental to the long-term success or failure of the criminal justice system. For instance, a three-judge panel ordered the State of California to reduce the inmate population in state prisons because of overcrowding. California lawmakers' solution to this growing problem has decriminalized many offenses because of the overpopulated prison system (Grattet et al., 2017).

Although much research focused on the positive effects of inmate education programs, research has not focused on interviewing repeat offenders to determine how to improve programs' implementation to increase the likelihood of their success. One limitation could be that some of the recommended changes from the offenders' perspective may not be attainable within California's correctional setting. However, the additional information will help criminal justice professionals and policymakers improve inmate programming and correctional success within Placer County, California.

Purpose Statement

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of repeat offenders under probation supervision in Placer County, California. The study also explored the challenges faced by repeat offenders after being released from custody. Unlike other qualitative approaches, which depend on the researcher's interpretation of experiences or events, Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology was used to explore participants and the meaning linked with their experiences. Due to the significant impact of recidivism on the mission and goals of corrections, this phenomenological study helped bridge the gap in knowledge by exploring and understanding the lived experiences of repeat offenders.

Qualitative research focuses on obtaining experience descriptions through first-person accounts through informal and formal conversations and interviews. During careful collection and analysis, the researcher attempted to make sense of or interpret the phenomenon regarding the meanings repeat offenders bring to the study. The researcher also used Moustakas' Transcendental phenomenology, which is one of the philosophical bases of the human science tradition. For example, Moustakas (1994) explained that Husserl's phenomenology was a Transcendental Phenomenology. This model emphasized subjectivity and the discovery of the essence of the experience and provided a systematic and disciplined methodology for the derivation of knowledge. Moustakas (1994) described the four general processes of the phenomenological method: Epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of textures and structures. In Epoché, the researcher began to change the natural self, put aside biases, and preconceived ideas to see things as they are.

In phenomenological reduction, the task is remembering and describing feelings, thoughts, and images of the experience just as one sees it. The purpose was to reduce

descriptions into horizons and themes of the experience. It also included bracketing, horizontalization, delimiting, clustering of themes, and a textural description of the experience. Imaginative variation targeted the meanings and intuition to integrate the structures into essences. It was also a stage where critical reflection, themes, and structures of the experience were developed. Lastly, the synthesis of textures and structures stage was where the researcher immersed in the data until they were thoroughly created. The researcher utilized this research procedure to capture the essence of offenders' recidivism as it pertained to impacting the goals and mission of corrections.

Significance of the Study

The research built upon prior research that showed the effectiveness of providing inmate education to offenders in custody while also determining where current programs can improve from the offenders' perspective. In addition, understanding the programming needs from an offender's perspective provided additional information on how correctional institutions can further develop programs tailored toward offenders' needs and reduce recidivism among low-level offenders in custody. The information obtained will further assist correctional institutions including: (1) what type of programming was best for the offender to benefit from when released from custody, (2) what type of programming offenders found to be most accessible while in-custody, (3) how other incentives further motivated the offender to participate in the educational programs, (4) whether programming benefitted the offender when released from custody. his dissertation aimed to understand factors that prevented or promoted recidivism in low-level offenders.

Many studies have shown the value of inmate programming to offenders and the positive impact on reducing recidivism. Through this study, the specific programming opportunities

offered to offenders while they were in custody was evaluated from the perspective of the offenders. In addition, these participants shared what factors helped them avoid recidivism after being released into society. The findings in this research study have the potential for practical applications and add to the body of theoretical and empirical knowledge on repeat offenders. It also provided firsthand information gained by interviews with the repeat offenders provided a better understanding of the emotions, desires, background, and lived experiences.

The implications of this study help inform policymakers to improve educational programs in correctional institutions. The programs aimed to increase the offender's self-control, self-management, and problem-solving skills (Boppre, 2019). These tools will help the offenders reintegrate into society and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. Additionally, improving educational programs was considered through formerly incarcerated offenders' perspectives to determine how inmate educational programs can further reduce recidivism. Drake and Fumia (2017) wrote that there is about a \$380,000 benefit to taxpayers for avoided costs in the criminal justice system, along with the avoided costs to victims in the future for every student that graduates from high school. Vandala (2019) found through her research that providing education opportunities while an offender was in custody helped change the offender's behavior and attitude, boosted the self-esteem and self-confidence of the offender, and ultimately transformed the offender into a law-abiding citizen.

Research has already shown the benefits of providing inmate education opportunities to offenders while they are in custody (Bozick et al., 2018). This research contributes to corrections and programming by adding the offenders' perspective of the programs offered and how the offenders perceive the implementation and potential success. However, educational opportunities may not be the only way to influence the offenders to improve their behavior and become

contributing members of society (Grasso, 2017). Additionally, correctional institutions' methods of delivering educational programs to offenders may not effectively keep the offenders motivated to complete the program.

This study's practical significance will improve the success of corrections within Placer County and the area in Placer County where these offenders commit their crimes. The strain on the corrections system has a more significant impact than solely the Placer County Sheriff's Office. The county citizens are affected by the increase in funding needed for expansion in the corrections system, the local law enforcement agencies are impacted by having to respond and continually handle the re-offenses, and the local citizens are affected as victims of the crimes. Through this research study, the goal is to improve inmate education opportunities while they are in custody and enhance the likelihood of success when released from custody (Bozick et al., 2018; Duwe, 2014).

Research Questions

Central Research Question: What are the lived experiences of repeat offenders under Placer County, California probation supervision?

Guiding Question 1: How do offenders describe their lived experiences as a repeat offender?

Guiding Question 2: How do offenders describe the support or lack of support from correctional intervention?

Guiding Question 3: How do offenders perceive the challenges experienced after being released back to the community?

Definitions

1. *Recidivism* – Reoffending after being convicted and sentenced for an offense (Bird et al., 2019), also defined as a person's relapse into criminal behavior after receiving sanctions or intervention for a previous crime (Recidivism, 2014). Although this is the definition of recidivism, there is much more to evaluating the success of corrections in the United States, such as policy change, decriminalization, and correctional realignment. The researcher will explain more about this in Chapter 2.
2. *Low-level offender* – Low-level offenders have committed a lower severity offense and serve their incarceration in county jail instead of a state prison (e.g., simple battery, non-violent drug offenses, and driving while intoxicated) (Davis et al., 2014).
3. *Level of Supervision Inventory-Revised (LSI-R)* – LSI-R is a method of evaluating the offender's risk and needs utilizing 54 different predictor items against the items of previously assessed offenders to determine the likelihood of recidivism (Flores et al., 2006).
4. *Risk Need Responsivity (RNR)* – A method of triaging offenders into programming based on the specified risk factors that influence offending (Taxman & Smith, 2020).
5. *High School Equivalency Diploma*– Clemens, Lalonde, and Sheesley (2016) described a high school equivalency diploma as a high school credential through a GED examination.
6. *Offender*- For this research study, the term offender includes an inmate currently in custody and those previously convicted of crimes no longer in custody.
7. *Phenomenology*- The research method used to understand participants' lived experiences Moustakas (1994)
8. *Realignment*- Places the responsibility of housing serious offenders on local counties rather than the state prison system (Lofstrom, Raphael, & Grattet, 2014).

9. *Rehabilitation*- Providing tools through intervention and programming to offenders in custody to prevent them from reoffending after being released into society (Cullen & Jonson, 2017).

Summary

Correctional institutions in California have been overpopulated for many years due to many "tough on crime" policies. While these policies have created a criminal justice system that holds offenders accountable, they have also created a revolving door in the state's correctional institutions. The LSI-R and the RNR are tools used to determine the likelihood of an offender's successful reintegration into society upon release. Through these evaluations, the offenders' education level is a significant factor in evaluating the offender's possibility of reoffending. However, overpopulation has caused policymakers to take drastic measures, including decriminalizing many offenses to reduce the inmate population. Another approach to lowering the offender population was to look at ways to reduce recidivism by finding ways to improve inmate programming by modifying it to meet the offenders' needs. This study discovered ways that programming efforts can be more effective from the offenders' perspective. The improved effectiveness can be how programming is facilitated or how different types of programming are offered to the offenders. The corrections system can further reduce recidivism and improve correctional success through these additional improvements.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Success within the correctional system is a complex process that needs to be analyzed through a critical assessment of the current attempts at lowering recidivism and improving correctional success. Some recent attempts have included tools designed to predict the offenders' needs through a series of tests to tailor programming to their specific needs. Other attempts have included providing the offenders with different types of educational programming while in custody to provide additional skills to help them succeed when released.

This literature review identified research studies that examined the different correctional programs' attempts to reduce recidivism and enhance correctional success. This chapter will discuss the recent research on topics that impact recidivism in corrections and the theoretical framework used to evaluate the experience of repeat offenders' lived experiences in Placer County, California. This research focused on assessing how inmate programming can be improved by gathering information from the offenders' perspectives. These first-hand experiences are a good starting point to determine how other inmate programming efforts can be implemented to improve the success of offenders further when they are released from custody.

Inmate programming has proven to be an effective way to help offenders overcome their criminal past and increase their potential to become productive members of society. However, correctional institutions cannot implement inmate programming as a standard program for all offenders; instead, programming should be tailored to the specific needs of each offender. Some offenders will have specific challenges when released, whereas others will have different challenges that cannot be addressed with the same intervention.

Additionally, there were some additional tools identified that determine offenders' needs while in custody, however, they fail to ensure the programming meets their needs. This study does not address the gap in identifying needs and implementing programming specific to the offenders' needs. However, this research examined the strategies already imposed in correctional settings to reduce recidivism rates and how the specific perspective of the offenders can further improve correctional success. The literature review outlined the different themes that have influenced recidivism over the years and the various attempts at reducing recidivism through offender rehabilitation and programming. The chapter ends with a summary of the literature presented with a focus on the gap in the literature focused on implementing programming to meet repeat offenders' needs from their perspective.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provided the roadmap for this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study. The theoretical framework provided the foundation for framing the study to examine the lived experiences of repeat offenders and the high levels of recidivism. This study's theoretical background was Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and motivation theory (1943). In the Hierarchy of Needs, people have five basic needs: physiological, safety-security, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

Physiological needs are basic needs and the starting point for physiological drives for people, such as food, water, and shelter (Maslow, 1943). The safety needs are the next after the initial psychological needs (Maslow, 1943). This set of needs includes job security, financial security, medical insurance, and retirement security (Taormina & Gao, 2013). Maslow (1943) described the following needs as belongingness or, in other words, the feeling of love for the person. The belongingness needs are fulfilled with love from family members, relationships, or

workgroups (Taormina & Gao, 2013). The esteem needs are the esteem the person receives from others and the esteem they show to others (Taormina & Gao, 2013). Finally, self-actualization is the need for the person to feel that they are doing what they intended or were meant to do (Maslow, 1943).

Repeat offenders who do not possess the necessary skill sets to achieve legal and fulfilling employment engage in a criminal enterprise to acquire their needs to survive. Additionally, when these offenders are released from custody without the necessary skills to leave the life of crime and move into a sustainable career, they fall back into their previous criminal activities to sustain their needs. This research aimed to identify gaps in the programming offenders receive while in custody to reduce the likelihood of the offender falling back into the criminal lifestyle to provide for their needs.

Maslow (1943) noted that the motivation theory begins with physiological needs. In other words, when the physiological needs of the offender are met, they will have the motivation to succeed. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs informs this dissertation in many ways, as the necessity for offenders to meet these basic needs when released from custody is the foundation for this study. This is also the foundation of improving inmate programming to assist the offenders' success when released from custody.

The primary theoretical assumption for the Hierarchy of Needs theory was when offenders struggle to meet their basic needs, they will not strive to become law-abiding citizens (Jones, 2004). Motivation theory drives offenders to succeed when released, but many fail to achieve success without the means to become productive members of society when released. Therefore, some offenders who have social support in place with family and friends when released have a greater chance of success because they have social networks to help them meet

their basic five needs. In contrast, those offenders who do not have a robust support system will have a more difficult time transitioning to contributing members of society because they may need to resort to criminal behavior to meet their basic needs. The success or failure of offenders released from custody is often linked to the offenders' drive to fulfill the needs outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. When the offender's basic needs are unmet, they will strive to do whatever they must to meet their needs (Maslow, 1943). Thus, the five needs according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can be linked to how an offender acts when released into the community from jail or prison:

- **Physiological-** Described as the basic needs to survive, such as food and water (Maslow, 1943), repeat offenders must do whatever skills they have to achieve these needs. Although these are described as the basic needs for survival, they must be fulfilled before the offender can move on to the higher needs. When an offender is released without the means to fulfill their physiological needs, they will do whatever they need to do to meet these needs, even if it includes returning to criminal behavior.
- **Safety-security-** After the initial physiological needs are met, the offender must look for ways to protect themselves in whatever environment they live in. As a result, if the offender does not have a stable social structure to return to when released from custody, some offenders will look to gang membership to help them fulfill these needs (Sonterblum, 2016). Auty and Liebling (2020) also found that when offenders feel safe in the correctional environment, they have a better chance of success when released back into society.
- **Belongingness-** The belongingness needs are described as friends, intimate relationships, and love needs (Oved, 2017). During this needs phase, the offender seeks to fulfill the need for

belongingness that can be achieved through legal and moral ways or other methods, such as associating with gangs or gang involvement (Sonterblum, 2016).

- Esteem- When offenders seek to fulfill this stage of their needs, they will look for ways to accomplish this specific need. When offenders do not have the social structure to meet their esteem needs, they may look toward gangs to build street credibility to achieve the esteem of fellow gang members (Sonterblum, 2016). In addition to the esteem skills affecting the offenders when released, Coticchia and Putnam (2021) also found that offenders with lower self-esteem are less likely to participate in rehabilitation while in custody.
- Self-actualization- The final stage of the Hierarchy of Needs is the Self-Actualization stage, when all other needs are fulfilled, and the offender looks to be the best they can be (Maslow, 1943; Sonterblum, 2016).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was the primary theoretical assumption for this research study. The assumption through the five stages was that the offender needs to have a way to meet the needs, whether it is through illegal or legitimate means. The study used a purposeful sample of repeat offenders to gain insight into the lived experiences of recidivism and how they perceived the challenges posed by their actions.

Related Literature

This section contains relevant attempts at improving correctional success and the chances of success for repeat offenders. The repeat offenders participating in this study had various backgrounds, education levels, and criminal records. The aspects reviewed and discussed included what actions were currently being taken in correctional institutions to identify and help to mitigate an offender's possibility of recidivism and what precursors the defendant faced before their incarceration that affected their life. This literature review section includes different

attempts at developing meaningful inmate programming to improve correctional success. These topics include the prediction assessments given to the offenders throughout the criminal justice process and the programming efforts implemented to help the offenders succeed when released.

Additionally, the need for programming toward the overall success of corrections was explained. Lastly, the conclusion of this chapter consists of a summary of what is already known for this study and any additional information that should be added to inmate programming, along with the information found in this section. This research will help correctional institutions implement specific programming tailored to the offenders based on their individual needs identified through the lived experience assessment.

Rehabilitation

The need for rehabilitation is not a new topic; it was a concept developed from the first penitentiary in the 1700s. In fact, at the time, there was a focus on ensuring the offenders received an education as a part of the mission of corrections (Schorb, 2014). Several years later, President Lyndon Johnson's appointed commission found that rehabilitation was the best way to prevent offenders from returning to their life of crime (Palmer, 2015).

The need for a punitive correctional system was recognized initially, but it was also necessary to provide ways for the offenders to overcome their offenses when released by giving them some resources (Schorb, 2014; Palmer, 2015). Unfortunately, there was still nearly a two-thirds recidivism rate among offenders in correctional institutions in California and over 6.6 million prisoners in custody nationwide (Bird et al., 2019; Kaeble & Cowhig, 2018). However, with the decriminalization of many offenses and the different definitions of recidivism (Bird et al., 2019), rehabilitation to help reduce recidivism and improve the overall success of corrections was more critical than ever.

In addition to reducing recidivism, Labrecque and Smith (2019) found that correctional institutions providing proactive rehabilitative services to offenders at the front end of their sentences improve institutional order. This improvement in correctional order among the offenders made the correctional institutions less reliant on restrictive housing (Labrecque & Smith, 2019). Additionally, the rehabilitation programs assisted the offenders in achieving a more productive and satisfying lifestyle (Wormith et al., 2007).

While the need for rehabilitation has been recognized since the beginning of corrections, there is a growing need to expand programming with the massive increase in the number of inmates in custody and the high levels of recidivism (Ojha et al., 2018; Ray et al., 2017; Seigafo, 2017). In addition, these valuable rehabilitation tools will improve correctional success and the offenders' ability to reintegrate into productive members of society upon their release from custody (Farley & Pike, 2016; Ray et al., 2017). Thus, the role of rehabilitation in corrections is vital to successfully reducing recidivism and improving correctional success.

Rehabilitation has many benefits, such as new skills that will help them reintegrate into society and decrease recidivism (Corleto, 2018). However, from the most basic cost-savings measure, providing inmates with programming opportunities while in custody will save taxpayers money because of the increased success of corrections (Campbell et al., 2018; Tietjen et al., 2018). However, the programming efforts must effectively meet the offenders' criminogenic needs. Criminal justice leaders need to adapt case management strategies to identify the individual learning styles of the offenders to be suited more specifically to the programming needs of the offenders (Ostermann & Caplan, 2016). These rehabilitation efforts provide the offenders with opportunities to receive an education that may not have been available

before incarceration. They also help them improve the likelihood of staying out of prison when released from custody (Davis, 2016).

Formon et al. (2018) studied the participation of offenders and non-offenders in community-based vocational programs. While this rehabilitation was focused on community-based vocational programs, the study's findings can be used to hypothesize the offenders' chances of success when they complete a vocational program. Formon et al. (2018) found that the program graduates obtained employment at equal rates, received equal starting salaries, and received pay raises at equal rates.

Providing the offenders' rehabilitation, whether in custody or when they are released, will also help alleviate the strain on correctional facilities by reducing the number of offenders that recidivate back into the system (Haas & Spence, 2016). Providing vocational rehabilitation when the offenders are released could be a successful alternative to providing the offenders with programming while in custody. However, many vocational programs are at the mercy of the companies willing to hire program graduates (Forman et al., 2018). For the vocational programs to be effective, the facilitators must establish a method to provide the offenders with job referrals when released (Baloch & Jennings, 2021).

The remaining sections of this research examined the different parts of inmate programming and the potential impact on improving correctional success. Some sections outlined the predictive tools used to determine what skills the offender needs and the likelihood of the offender becoming successful when released. Other sections focused on the methods of intervention provided to the offenders after the assessment and how these interventions can lead to a successful life outside of custody for the offender.

Tools for Predicting Offenders' Needs

Many criminal justice organizations have implemented tools to determine an offender's needs while in custody and what measures correctional institutions can take to increase their success when released from custody. Additionally, some risk assessments are used even after the offender is released from custody to determine the risk of reoffending after being released to community supervision (Scanlan et al., 2020). An effective correctional institution intervention program will identify an offender's needs and the offender's risk of reoffending when released from custody (Zortman et al., 2016).

A necessary part of the rehabilitation effort to increase correctional success is predicting the offenders' needs while in custody (Scanlan et al., 2020). These evaluation methods were studied to make a successful transition from living in custody to becoming a contributing member of society when released. Through this evaluation process, offenders are questioned to determine their background and need to develop programming specific to the offender based on their needs. Criminal justice professionals have implemented various inmate programs nationwide to determine the offender's likelihood of reoffending when released from custody. The Risk Need and Responsivity evaluation, the Level of Service-Inventory, and the Dynamic Risk Assessment for Offender Re-Entry are ways to evaluate the offender's probability of reoffending when they are released. These evaluations assist correctional institutions in determining what programming and services to provide the offender while in custody.

Although these assessments are not the only tools available to measure the offender's needs and the likelihood of success, they assist criminal justice professionals in providing programming and rehabilitation tailored for the offender while they are in custody to increase their chance of success when released (Bosma et al., 2016). The criminogenic needs of the

offenders, the likelihood of recidivism, and their potential responsiveness to treatment are all considered during the evaluation process (Bosma et al., 2016; Hay et al., 2018).

After completing this assessment, the corrections system must work collaboratively with those providing programming to ensure they meet the offender's needs. This collaboration will ensure that the appropriate tools for success are provided to the offender and increase their chances of success when released from custody. Without collaboration, the offender's programming will likely not be implemented specific to their needs and will not provide them with the best chance for success when released.

Risk Need and Responsivity

The Risk Need and Responsivity (RNR) is a case management strategy for the criminal justice system during the probation process to determine the level of programming the offender needs, based on their strengths, aspirations, and capital, before their release back into society (Drawbridge et al., 2020; Drawbridge et al., 2019; Horan et al., 2020). Although the RNR uses two components, the risk assessment to predict criminal behavior and appropriately match the service level to the risk, the process has flaws. Some of the flaws with the review can result in increased illegal activity by the participants when there is a failure in the need-to-service matching through the evaluation process (Vigilone, 2019; Drawbridge et al., 2020). Additionally, McNelley (2023) found through her research that the RNR should be incorporated with career-focused education programs so the education programs are more successful.

This case management strategy has limitations. First, it should be considered along with the offenders' individual needs so criminal justice professionals can develop a plan to address the disabilities, literacy level, or other cognitive or processing disorders of the subject (Taxman & Smith, 2020; Campbell et al., 2015). Second, the RNR is a valuable tool to determine the six

classification schemes an offender needs to help them overcome their criminal lifestyle (Taxman & Smith, 2020). Although this classification scheme will help determine the different types of needs for the offenders, it does not determine the level for each classification. Therefore, it may need to be expanded for each offender's different levels of programming (Taxman & Smith, 2020).

Finally, the RNR is a tool that criminal justice professionals can utilize to determine the level of programming needed for offenders to assist them in becoming contributing members of society when released. Although there has been some success with the RNR, additional information is needed through this process to assist the repeat offender in receiving the programming required to leave their life of crime. The additional information will help the offender become a contributing member of society and ultimately save taxpayers money by reducing recidivism (Campbell et al., 2018).

Level of Supervision Inventory-Revised

The Level of Supervision Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) is one of the most tested evaluation tools used to predict the needs of offenders when they are in custody and assist the offender in making a successful transition into society when released from custody (Lowder et al., 2017a; Powers et al., 2017; Clark, 2016; DeMichele et al., 2016). Although primarily a quantitative tool, LSI-R can identify specific needs through this process to identify how to assist the offender through specific feedback from the repeat offenders and their life experiences (Singh, 2018). The LSI-R evaluates 54 risk factors within ten risk domains that help criminal justice professionals identify the offenders' needs while in custody, making them easier to transition to life outside of the correctional institution (Byrne & Pattavina, 2017; Lowder et al., 2019a).

The LSI-R is an excellent tool to provide a snapshot of offenders' backgrounds and potential needs while in custody. However, some downfalls with the LSI-R in implementing the identified programs and probation assessments before the offenders' release into society (Lowder et al., 2019a; Schmidt et al., 2018). The LSI-R evaluation does not identify all the offender's needs; instead, it provides the correctional institution a starting point for programming the offender. When performing the LSI-R of offenders with different backgrounds, there needs to be additional evaluation to determine if the offender's needs have a social or cultural aspect of ensuring they receive the best programming for success (Schmidt et al., 2019). The LSI-R is a valuable tool to determine the specific programming needed for offenders in custody. However, additional information is required to improve programming quality and correctional success.

The LSI-R provides criminal justice professionals with tools to examine the propensity of specific offenders to re-offend when released (McNeeley, 2018; Lowder et al., 2019b). Although these tools identify potential recidivism risks, they do not tell criminal justice professionals precisely how to administer specific programming to overcome the offenders' shortcomings and become contributing members of society. The LSI-R should be used with offenders in custody to determine how to focus their programming on meeting their needs. However, additional information and the LSI-R will ensure the offenders receive adequate programming to succeed. Ostermann and Salerno (2016) found that the LSI-R was a valid predictor of recidivism as the composite score of the offender statistically showed a significant relationship to the recidivism outcome.

Dynamic Risk Assessment for Offender Re-Entry

The Dynamic Risk Assessment for Offender Re-Entry (DRAOR) is a risk assessment implemented in New Zealand since 2010 (Yesberg & Polaschek, 2015). The DRAOR was

designed as a dynamic risk assessment tool that must be repeated several times with the same offender after they are released from custody to reevaluate the offenders' risk assessment and assist probation officers with case management (Yesberg & Polaschek, 2015). The probation officers that have contact with the offenders scored the DRAOR every time they contact the subject (Polaschek & Yesberg, 2018). These reassessments gave the probation officers a real-time look at the offender's likelihood of reoffending (Scanlon et al., 2020).

The DRAOR comprises 19 items to evaluate the probability of the offender reoffending when released back to the community (Scanlan et al., 2020). The 19 predictive items are divided into three subscales: stable dynamic risk factors, acute dynamic risk factors, and protective factors (Yesberg & Polaschek, 2015). Through this assessment, a numerical score for each subscale places the offender in a category based on the risk of future offending (Scanlan et al., 2020). The offender is not given an overall score; the probation officers evaluate each subscale to see potential problem areas (Serin et al., 2016). The assessment factors of the offenders are the observable or measurable factors, but the assessment also considers the unobservable construct of the offenders' future behavior (Scanlan et al., 2020).

The DRAOR is another tool that can be utilized after the offenders are released from custody to determine the level of supervision needed for the offenders' continued success when released back into society. As shown, this predictive tool must be repeated often when the offender is under community supervision to update the offender's current risk assessment of reoffending. Lloyd et al. (2020) found that this incremental reassessment was one of the

strengths of this assessment model to increase an offender's success when they were released from custody.

Incorporating Predictive Assessments into Programming

Predictive assessments can be a valuable tool to incorporate into inmate programming to reduce recidivism and improve the success of corrections. Predictive assessments are tools criminal justice professionals can use for early evaluations to determine the supervision resources an offender will require when released into the community (Skeem & Lowenkamp, 2016). In addition to the supervision resources required, these assessments have become valuable tools for assessing the offenders' criminal record and their likelihood of reoffending. Lastly, these assessments can help criminal justice professionals plan offender-specific criminogenic need programming while in custody to help them successfully reenter society when released (Butler et al., 2018).

These predictive assessments do not necessarily provide a complete picture of the necessary programming and offender needs. These assessments may help criminal justice professionals to identify the specific criminogenic needs, the offenders still must assist criminal justice professionals in implementing the identified programs. Even with the multiple different assessments available for criminal justice organizations to administer, organizations should only stick to using one at a time, as various assessments can make it difficult to determine the actual needs of the offender (Kroner, 2020).

Offender Classification

Correctional institutions classify offenders as a method of determining and categorizing the offenders based on a variety of risk factors and the type of offense committed (Mulder et al., 2019). One of the initial evaluations done by correctional institutions is a classification at intake

for the offenders based on various needs (Narag et al., 2018). This first assessment is an essential step in the rehabilitation process for the rest of the offenders' time in custody, including how the offender will be housed while in custody, preparing the offender for reentry, and post-release planning (Singh et al., 2018). Through these different assessment tools during the classification process, the offenders will determine what potential programming will benefit their long-term success back in society when released from custody (Singh et al., 2018).

During the classification process, various tools are used to determine how to classify the new offender. One of the processes is the risk needs assessment. The risk needs assessment can determine if the offender is at a low, medium, or high risk. This will help determine the rehabilitation efforts required and the method by which programming is administered to the offender (Singh et al., 2018). Additionally, diagnostic instruments such as the LSI-R and RNR are administered by intake officers to assess the treatment and criminogenic needs of the offender when they come into custody (Singh et al., 2018). Finally, just like adult classification methods, there are also methods used for juveniles to determine the likelihood of reoffending when they are released back into society (Baglivio & Wolff, 2019).

Another classification method, machine learning techniques, was studied by Maynard et al. (2023), utilizing classification trees and random forests. Maynard et al. (2023) found the classification process using random forests to be incrementally more valid than a more traditional logistic regression approach to classification correlates of the arrest. Additionally, Maynard et al. (2023) found that when classification staff has access to the machine learning analysis of the data, they can identify the relationship between risk factors and help develop strategies more appropriate to manage the offender's specific needs. Specifically, the machine learning analysis can help develop more accurate strategies for managing substance use

dependence and other behaviors that are often linked to the risk of reoffending. The machine learning classification approach may be a more efficient method of classification to identify the risk factors of offenders when they are released and improve their case management and success when they are released back into society (Maynard et al., 2023).

Recidivism and Poverty

Poverty and disadvantage were the most significant predictive measures to consider when evaluating an offender's likelihood of reoffending when released from custody (Clark, 2016; Han, 2020). Additionally, one of the most significant disadvantages of repeat offenders paroled in the community is exposure back to the impoverished area, where they were already more susceptible to criminal activity and higher levels of recidivism (Clark, 2016; Halushka, 2019; Vandala, 2019). When these repeat offenders were released from custody and placed back into the same situation they came from, the offender continued to have difficulty obtaining gainful employment because of their lack of access to sustainable jobs because of their criminal record (Sered & Norton-Hawk, 2021). Even those offenders placed on supervised community release programs at the end of their in-custody sentence were susceptible to high levels of recidivism because of the lack of employment opportunities (Seim & Harding, 2020).

When offenders from impoverished areas are in custody, providing them with the knowledge and skills to navigate public assistance resources when released can help their successful reintegration into society (Halushka, 2019). However, one of the challenges these offenders face would be the federal ban because of the 1996 welfare reform that banned drug offenders from receiving public assistance when they are released from custody if the offender had a felony drug conviction (Yang, 2017; Hall et al., 2016; Tuttle, 2019). As a result of this

policy, many social programs designed to assist a person in getting reestablished when they experience hard times are not available for these offenders if they have a felony drug conviction.

The main problem with poverty and recidivism is that if offenders do not have a way to escape poverty with limited exposure to sustainable employment, they will return to their criminal enterprise to meet their survival needs (Sered & Norton-Hawk, 2021). As a result, the offender will have a more challenging time leaving the life of crime and becoming a contributing member of society. However, correctional institutions can provide offenders with programming while in custody to increase their chances of finding post-release employment when released from custody and increase their chances of success (Vandala, 2019).

Offenders that come from disadvantaged neighborhoods without adequate social services in the area have a higher likelihood of recidivism, while offenders that live in more affluent neighborhoods with more social service opportunities for residents living in the area have a lower risk of recidivism (McNeeley, 2018; Han, 2020; Kendall et al., 2018). In addition to the disadvantaged neighborhoods with a higher recidivism rate, there is a correlation between minority offenders in underprivileged communities but minimal impact on white offenders living in disadvantaged areas (McNeely, 2017).

This portion of the review showed that poverty impacts recidivism among offenders. Although there were some race differences in the results, the main focus was providing offenders from these areas additional programming, as well as determining what other programming was necessary to improve correctional success and lower recidivism among offenders from disadvantaged neighborhoods. Meeting the needs of offenders from these disadvantaged neighborhoods can be accomplished through additional research on the lived experiences of repeat offenders and how the inmate programming can meet their needs.

In addition to other factors associated with poverty and recidivism, providing correctional education to offenders from impoverished areas can improve their socioeconomic status and help them secure employment upon release from custody (Vandala, 2019). Jagers et al. (2015) found through their research evidence that poverty and offenders being disadvantaged academically are risk factors for future incarceration and involvement in the adult justice system. This is one reason to ensure that offenders from disadvantaged areas have the same academic opportunities as those offenders from more affluent areas.

Education While in Custody

Providing education to offenders while they are in custody was identified as a vital part of improving correctional success. Several studies have shown the effectiveness of providing inmate education programs to offenders while in custody reduces recidivism and increases the likelihood of successful reintegration into society when they are released (Bozick et al., 2018; Mertanen & Beunila, 2018; Duwe, 2017; Vandala, 2019; Duke, 2018). Bozick et al. (2018) found that offenders who participated in correctional education were 12% more likely to find post-release employment than offenders who did not participate in education programs.

In addition to in-person instruction, Davis (2013) found through her research that there was improved math and reading achievement among offenders who participated in computer-assisted instruction while in custody. Computer-assisted instruction will allow the offenders to participate in self-paced instruction, which can be delivered to the offenders at a lower cost than traditional instruction (Davis, 2013). Collica-Cox (2022) studied remote instruction for offenders incarcerated in the Westchester County Department of Correction and found that the students reported a positive experience. The method of instruction used by students within the correctional facility and other students in the community integrated into the same virtual

classroom. While there are some obvious security concerns with this method of instruction, there could be some integration of offenders in different parts of the correctional facility placed in the same virtual classroom to expand the capabilities of each class.

In addition to lowering the chance of recidivism, Vandala (2019) found that providing offenders education while they are in custody changes their behavior and attitude, increases their self-esteem and self-confidence, increases their employment skills, improves their cognitive skills, promotes growth, and can transform the offenders into law-abiding citizens. The education program does not have to be a traditional academic program, but this same advantage was also found in offenders that participated in vocational education programs (Bozick et al., 2018). This was one way that programming not only can reduce recidivism but also develop the offenders into more well-rounded citizens.

Vandala (2019) found through their research that educated offenders have a better chance of gaining employment when released, thus decreasing their chances of reoffending. In addition to education helping offenders secure employment, Vandala (2019) found that when offenders have low literacy levels, they struggle to obtain employment. Thus, providing education opportunities to offenders in custody to increase their literacy level will also help them obtain employment when released from custody.

Additionally, when offenders participate in educational programs such as GED or college classes, they are less likely to engage in misconduct in custody (Pompoco et al., 2017). Pompoco et al. (2017) specifically found that completing college courses or GEDs within the first year of the offender's incarceration reduced the likelihood that the offender would engage in violence in custody. Thus, not only is education a benefit for offenders when released from custody, but their

participation while in custody helps the correctional institution keep the offenders' behavior in order.

Although in-person instruction is ideal, other modes of providing rehabilitation, such as virtual programming to the offenders while they are in custody, can be incorporated into regular in-person programs to supplement the capabilities of the correctional institutions (Ticknor, 2019; Garman, 2020). Technology, such as podcasts and other means of information delivery, has also been proven to rehabilitate offenders within the correctional system (Chan et al., 2019). These educational opportunities allow the offenders to acquire more information to help them with employment opportunities when released from custody and increase their chances of success (Schnepel, 2018; Mertanen & Brunila, 2018; Vandala, 2019).

Life Skills Training

Abrams and Lea (2016) found that many correctional institutions have included life skills training in their correctional education programming to improve offenders' outcomes when released and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. Like the other rehabilitation programs while in custody, Abrams and Lea (2016) explained that the offender should receive a needs assessment to determine what programming meets the offender's specific needs. In addition to the different educational programs, Baloch and Jennings (2021) found that providing the offenders with other life skills, such as job readiness training, resume writing, interview skills, and counseling services, will help the offenders attain other skills to help them be successful when they are released. These life skills training programs are one way to help offenders obtain the skills necessary to succeed in society when released.

Towne et al. (2023) wrote that 81% of the Nebraska Vocational Life Skills (VLS) program participants were assisted to obtain and keep meaningful employment. The VLS

provided the offender skills, including assistance with resume building, giving the offender a credible reference, helping the offender to find a career with benefits, assistance obtaining identification, and obtaining equipment required for employment. The participants in Towne et al. (2023) indicated that the coursework alone was not the reason for their transformation; rather, the social support and inspiration of the program were the most valuable for them.

Another life skill that could be provided to offenders while they are in custody is financial literacy courses. These courses are tailored to provide the offender with the basic financial concepts to help the offender with consumer decision-making (Glachus, 2014). Waxman et al. (2022) wrote that financial literacy must be added among the other general education programs, such as GED and job training, to help the offender reintegrate into society when released.

Glidden et al. (2020) found that incarcerated female offenders displayed lower levels of financial literacy than females from the general public. Additionally, they found that predatory lending was disproportionately high among incarcerated offenders (Glidden et al., 2020). The offenders view this lending as a short-term solution to their lack of financial means. However, it has a long-term negative impact because of the high-interest rates, unreasonable payments, and hidden fees (Glidden et al., 2020).

High School Equivalency

Providing offenders with a high school education while in custody has been a proven initial step in ensuring they can find post-release employment (Schnepel, 2018). Offender participation in high school equivalency programming while in custody increased their chance of obtaining their high school diploma because most offenders will not complete it when released from custody (Miller et al., 2019). Additionally, those offenders that did not have a high school

diploma also struggled to complete the other aspects of their rehabilitation while they were in custody and were more likely to be charged with an additional offense while in custody (Gill, 2016; Pompoco et al., 2019).

Offenders who completed their general education development (GED) also had less misconduct while in custody (Pompoco et al., 2017). Roessger et al. (2021) found that the recidivism rate of offenders with more serious offenses was positively impacted by completing a GED more than offenders with less serious offenses. However, they found there did not seem to be a big difference between offenders that started programming but did not finish compared to offenders who did not participate in programming. The impact was made when offenders participated in educational programming and completed their GED.

The impact of obtaining a high school diploma while in custody has proven to have some additional positive effects on the offender, such as crime and gang desistance (Sayegh et al., 2019). The high school equivalency programming should include other programs such as reading, and math tutoring, teaching Spanish speakers to speak English, and exposing inmates to different vocational programs while in custody (Reese, 2017). Programs like this have expanded their scope from providing streamlined and standardized programs to programs that meet the specific needs of the offenders to help them find employment upon their release and overcome their criminal past (Reese, 2017; Emmert, 2019; Bozick et al., 2018; Koo, 2015).

Vocational Programming

Although educational programming was one identified way to provide offenders with additional skills while in custody, not all offenders desire to participate in formal education. Therefore, another critical aspect of the rehabilitation process is providing the offenders with additional job skills through vocational programming to improve the possibility of their

successful reentry into society when they are released (Davis et al., 2014; Jefferson, 2017).

Additionally, providing vocational programming will assist those offenders who may not have the desire or the ability to obtain other job skills to find a way to acquire gainful employment when they are released from custody (Miller et al., 2019).

Vocational training, sometimes called career and technical education, was one way for offenders to obtain the necessary skills and certification to obtain employment upon release from custody (Dewey et al., 2020). This type of education focuses primarily on the employability of the offender, rather than traditional education, and is focused on the offender's basic skills and vocational training (Costelloe & Warner, 2014). In addition to providing vocational training, McNelley (2023) found that it was important for the programs to build relationships with community employers to assist with the practical barriers to employment.

Vocational programming was linked to offenders' ability to gain employment opportunities when released from custody and reduce recidivism (Formon et al., 2018). Bozick et al. (2018) wrote that the vocational education inmates receive is primarily tailored to provide occupation-specific skills for the offender, a skill employers value when making hiring decisions. Furthermore, offenders participating in vocational programs while in custody were less likely to return to prison within three years of release (Pompoco et al., 2017). Through her research, McNelley (2023) found that offenders who participated in vocational education while in custody could find employment easier, received more work hours when released, and received better wages. Bozick et al. (2018) wrote that vocational education is intended to expedite the transition to employment for the offender and provide the offender with an alternative to committing crimes.

In addition to vocational programs while in custody, community-based vocational programs were another way to assist offenders in leaving their criminal past and becoming productive members of society (Seigafo, 2017; Formon et al., 2018). Formon et al. (2018) found that community-based vocational programs can benefit offenders as they may be more stable and consistent without relying on the criminal justice system to provide the programming. In addition to the community-based vocational programs, McNelley (2023) wrote that offenders would benefit more if the vocational programs were coupled with other measures to help the offenders overcome the practical barriers to finding work.

Higher Education

One of the most politically controversial topics in inmate education programming is allowing offenders to participate in college classes while in custody (Mackall, 2018). However, several studies have shown that when offenders participate in higher education programs while they are in custody, they receive education in addition to professional skills, job skills, and personal attributes to connect with larger social groups to increase their chance of success when released (Pelletier & Evans, 2019; Evans et al., 2019; Brock, 2017). Additionally, Mackall (2018) noted in his research that higher education in prison impacted recidivism and cost-effectively reduced the incarcerated population.

Bozick et al. (2018) wrote that with President Obama's reinstatement of Pell Grants in 2015, offenders could secure college funding while in custody. This single decision has reinvigorated public opinion about how corrections play a vital role in rehabilitating offenders while they are in custody (Bozick et al., 2018). Additionally, Oakford et al. (2019) estimated that expanding higher education in the United States will likely lower reincarceration spending and could save the states \$365.8 million annually. Davis (2013) noted in her research that for every

\$1 spent on correctional education, the incarceration costs are reduced by \$4 to \$5 in the first three years post-release. Additionally, Oakford et al. (2019) noted that offenders with greater educational attainment in custody are better suited for good-paying jobs when released.

In addition to directly reducing recidivism among offenders who participated in higher education, many other benefits are associated with providing higher education to offenders in custody (Pelletier & Evans, 2019). For example, offenders who participated in high education developed personal attributes and skills: including communication skills, confidence, leadership, and a positive self-image (Pelletier & Evans, 2019). Additionally, offenders noted that they expanded their social networks and improved relations with their families, were motivated to continue their education, and helped prepare them for employment (Pelletier & Evans, 2019).

Although providing higher education to offenders while they are in custody will likely remain a controversial topic, the benefits of this programming are undeniable. The challenge will continue to be implementing this type of programming, even with many documented benefits. These benefits are not only to the offender but also to society as it relates to cost-effectively reducing the inmate population, which ultimately reduces costs for housing offenders within the criminal justice system. Bozick et al. (2018) wrote that in their research of studies published over 27 years, offenders who participated in correctional education were 32% less likely to re-offend than offenders who did not participate in education programs.

Multiple Interventions

Hsieh et al. (2022) found through their research that multiple correctional interventions were more effective at reducing recidivism, rather than one of the interventions alone. The interventions included in Hsieh et al. (2022) were basic educational skills (high school equivalency), vocational training, and cognitive behavior therapy. Through their research, they

found that providing basic education along with cognitive behavior therapy reduced the recidivism rate of offenders the most. Hsieh et al. (2022) also wrote that risk-need-responsivity assessment should continue to be used to determine what specialized treatment combinations the individual offender needs.

Duwe and Kim (2018) found through their research that while they focused their research on a single correctional intervention, they also recommended assessing responsivity in multiple interventions to achieve the most significant benefit. Simpson et al. (2019) wrote that effective treatment of persons in custody includes addressing the offender's mental health care, substance use, and criminogenic risk and need factors. Hamilton et al. (2015) wrote that often offenders with mental illness are often excluded from vocational services because of their mental health.

Rehabilitation is Critical to Improving Correctional Success

Rehabilitating offenders while they are in custody is an integral part of lowering recidivism and improving correctional success. Many offenders enter the criminal justice system without a high school diploma or the equivalent making it very difficult for them to be successful when released (Duwe & Clark, 2014). Implementing offender programming must be tailored to the offender's needs and not a one-style approach for every offender.

There were many approaches to correctional rehabilitation to provide offenders with additional opportunities, such as educational programs, vocational training, or career technical training (Newton et al., 2018). The intake programs need to look at the various risk assessments completed by the offender to determine their specific programming needs (Newton et al., 2018). These opportunities for offenders are intended to work with the offender and provide them with skills to successfully reintegrate into society when released and not commit new offenses.

Abrams and Lea (2016) found that some states have established policies that prevent offenders with felonies from working in some private or public industries. Suppose correctional institutions can provide additional rehabilitation to the offenders. In that case, it will assist the offender in overcoming the additional barriers they face and allow them to become successful members of society when released. Additionally, the rehabilitation programs should integrate some other method of job placement for offenders who complete the program, such as working with employers to secure insurance free of charge if they hire offenders that complete the rehabilitation program (Waxman et al., 2022).

Summary

This review examined how reducing recidivism and improving correctional success have been studied. The various ways of providing offenders tools for success have been implemented in various different ways, with different tools to provide the offenders a chance for successful reintegration into society. Some of these attempts have succeeded, and others have not. Either way, the need for further research to determine how to improve correctional success by reducing recidivism through innovative rehabilitative means is the focus of the rest of this paper.

Rehabilitation has been a part of the corrections process since the early years. The need for offenders to improve their education through rehabilitation was one of the first identified measures to help offenders overcome their criminal past and move on to being productive members of society. However, the way different rehabilitation methods have been implemented needs to be improved. For example, how one offender learns may not be the best way for another offender. As a result, the rehabilitation needs should be evaluated through a lens that the practice of providing rehabilitative efforts have to be modified to meet the needs of the specific offender and not through a one size fits all method.

The next attempt at reducing recidivism and improving correctional success was evaluated by looking at the tools for predicting offenders' needs. The Risk Needs and Responsivity (RNR), Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R), and Dynamic Risk Assessment for Offender Re-Entry (DRAOR) were the three tools used to determine how to incorporate them into the process of correctional success. Bozick ET al. (2018) found through their research that the RNR identifies one of the criminogenic needs directly influenced by an offender receiving correctional education programming. These quantitative tools effectively identified offenders' needs when entering the criminal justice system based on their charges and background.

However, implementing programming for the offender still needs a specific look at how the offenders' needs will be met through the process. Therefore, these tools should be used with additional life experience research from the offenders on how programming can be better applied to individual offenders in custody. This process will further assist the offenders in overcoming their criminal past and ultimately becoming successful contributing members of society when released.

The classification of offenders allows criminal justice professionals to predict the level of supervision and other offenders they can associate with while the offenders are in custody. In addition, these classification strategies identify the offender's background offenses and their needs while in custody. These evaluations should be used with other rehabilitative efforts to ensure the offender is provided with adequate tools for success. However, through this process, some offenders will not benefit from participation in programming, education, or vocational programming while in custody (i.e., offenders serving life sentences for capital crimes).

Offenders from impoverished neighborhoods are not subjected to the same social resources as those from a more affluent part of town. As a result of this deficit, the offender may have to obtain their basic needs, according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, in other ways other than using social resources to assist the offender in getting back on their feet in society. As a result, it is even more essential to provide offenders from underprivileged areas with tools to help them succeed when released from custody.

Education has been an effective way to provide offenders with additional tools for success when released from custody. Specifically, several studies show the positive outcomes of offenders' higher education participation and reduced recidivism rates (Pelletier & Evans, 2019). However, to continue improving outcomes related to offering offenders education while in custody, correctional institutions need to incorporate the lived experiences of offenders into the planning and implementation of educational programs to improve correctional success further and lower recidivism rates.

Education is critical to rehabilitation when planning interventions to prevent future offenses (Cuervo et al., 2020). Additionally, education while in custody is crucial because of the other benefits offered to the offender for completion (Pompoco et al., 2017). Together educational programming will incentivize offenders to participate in programming while providing them with meaningful skills to help them become productive members of society when released.

All these efforts must collaborate to ensure comprehensive rehabilitation for offenders in custody. Rehabilitation through education or vocational programming has proven to provide offenders with tools for success when released from custody. Any of these efforts alone will impact offenders' success; however, if they collaborate, there will be a more significant impact

on correctional success. In addition to the traditional programming methods, providing the offenders with life skills training will also help them succeed when released. These tools will assist the offender in using the other vocational skills obtained while in custody and obtaining gainful employment along with other basic skills to succeed in society.

When considering the importance of rehabilitation and programming to reduce recidivism and improve correctional success, the theoretical framework must be the foundation for why many low-level offenders re-offend. For example, if the only way offenders know to provide income for their basic needs is theft, they will continue thieving. However, when rehabilitation provides the offender with life skills and job skills to obtain gainful employment upon release from custody, it will likely keep the offender from reoffending (Schnepel, 2018). However, the ability of the offender to obtain a quality, sustainable job is more critical than the offender working a low-level job (Schnepel, 2018). As a result, correctional institutions must provide offenders with meaningful job skills to obtain gainful employment upon their release from custody.

The use of rehabilitation is critical to lowering recidivism and improving correctional success. Although some argue that programming offenders lack specificity for the offenders' risks and needs (Gill & Wilson, 2016), these evaluations and programs can help the rest of the programming efforts be more effective. Additionally, correctional programming effectively reduces recidivism and improves public safety (Gobeil et al., 2016). Even though some single interventions are effective for some offenders, there is also a need for correctional staff to consider a multiple-intervention approach for offenders. This will allow the offender to receive comprehensive rehabilitation while in custody and potentially be more successful when released.

Much of the research shown in this review highlights different methods of evaluating offenders to increase their chance of success when released from a correctional institution. However, these tools look at all offenders through the same lens. They do not look at other factors from the offenders' perspective on improving individual programming to increase the chance of each offender's success when released. For instance, the LSI-R evaluates an offender using 54 risk factors to determine their success probability when released (Byrne & Pattavina, 2017; Lowder et al., 2019a). However, there also needs to be an evaluation addressing the specific needs of each offender, such as their drive, goals, or expected outcomes when released from custody.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of repeat offenders and inmate programming while in custody in Placer County, California. This study provides information about improving inmate programming to help improve the chances of success when repeat offenders are released from correctional facilities into society and improve correctional success. This chapter discusses the design of the proposed research study, the proposed research questions, the proposed setting, and the prospective participants. This chapter also outlines the procedures used for the research, the role of the researcher, the method of data collection from the participants of the interviews, and the analysis of the data collected. The conclusion of this chapter includes the trustworthiness of the research and any ethical considerations in the study.

Design

When the researcher considered the design for this study, the qualitative transcendental phenomenological model was the most applicable for the information needed to evaluate the effectiveness of inmate programming. This model was the best method to research the lived experience of repeat offenders who have participated in inmate programming while in custody in Placer County, California. The study evaluated how inmate programming affected the participants' ability to succeed in society when released from custody. The transcendental phenomenological research method was the best way to understand the participants' lived experiences from their perspective (Moustakas, 1994). This perspective will allow criminal justice professionals to look at improving inmate education from the participants' perspective.

The transcendental phenomenological design was selected to examine the lived

experiences of offenders within Placer County, California. However, this researcher also explored other qualitative research methods to ensure that transcendental phenomenology was the best method for this study. Ethnography and grounded theory were two forms of qualitative research examined to see if they would be appropriate for this study.

The ethnography method of qualitative research was examined to determine if it would be appropriate for this study. The use of ethnography is a method designed to describe and interpret the commonalities of the culture of a group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, ethnography focuses on understanding the patterns of a culture-sharing group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This specific study did not fit the focus of the research as the participants will not necessarily be from the same cultural group. Additionally, the focus of this study was to examine the participants' lived experiences, and ethnography will not explore the lived experiences of the offenders through inmate programming in Placer County, California.

The grounded theory research method was also examined as a method of research for this study. The grounded theory research process is designed to be used with information from participants and to generate an explanation for the process, in this case, why the offenders continued to re-offend. However, the grounded theory focuses on analyzing data to develop themes from data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). However, the focus of this study was to examine the lived experiences of participants in inmate programming in Placer County, California. The grounded theory was not a research method that will obtain the information for this research study.

Overall Design – Qualitative

A qualitative design was used to study the participants' experiences from their perspectives during this study. A qualitative research design was appropriate because this

method facilitated in-depth detailed examinations of peoples' lived experiences. Several quantitative research studies show the positive effects of participants in programming while they are in custody (Bozick et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2014; Duke, 2018); however, this study looked at the lived experiences of offenders to further improve the delivery of programming.

General Design – Phenomenology

The phenomenological design was chosen to understand the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, the evidence for the phenomenological method “is derived from first-person reports of the life experiences” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 84). The findings of this study will help criminal justice professionals evaluate the process they are providing inmate programming and improve the delivery. The phenomenological approach “utilizes only the data available to the consciousness – the appearance of objects” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 45). Looking only at the data presented during this research will allow professionals to receive this study as a standalone research document based only on the experiences of the participants interviewed instead of needing to place it in conjunction with another research study already received.

The phenomenological design will also help understand why the participants continue to commit offenses after participating in various inmate programs while in custody. The information received directly from the participants will help improve the different types of programming offered to participants while in custody. This improvement will ultimately help improve the participants' chance of success when released from custody and improve correctional success.

Specific Design – Transcendental

The transcendental approach was the best approach for this study to look at the participants' experiences at face value without any other influences on the information they provided during the interviews. The transcendental approach "adheres to what can be discovered through reflection on subjective acts and their objective correlates" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 45). Moustakas (1994) also wrote that a transcendental phenomenology study focuses on how things appear to those who see things in their consciousness. When using the transcendental phenomenological approach, the researcher's goal was to conduct the research without preconceptions, beliefs, or knowledge of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

This transcendental phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of repeat offenders in Placer County, California. The research was centered on the idea that correctional intervention benefits offenders; however, how did the participants describe their lived experience with the intervention? Additionally, the participants' descriptions and perceptions of the challenges they faced was be explored through this study.

Central Research Question: What are the lived experiences of repeat offenders under Placer County, California probation supervision?

The guiding questions were necessary to explore the participants' perceptions of their experiences. Additionally, these guided questions assisted the participants in describing their perceptions through the process, the support system they had through the correction intervention they received, and how they perceived the challenges of reintegrating into the community.

- Guiding Question 1: How do offenders describe their lived experiences as a repeat offender?
- Guiding Question 2: How do offenders describe the support or lack of support from correctional intervention?
- Guiding Question 3: How do offenders perceive the challenges experienced after being released back to the community?

Interview Settings

The participants chose the setting for the data collection interviews, beneficial to their safety, well-being, and location. Participants were recruited through the Placer County Probation Department by personal contact with their probation officers. Public places, such as a local coffee shop or café, were encouraged to ensure the participants were in a position of comfort. The only requirement for this study was that the participant had to have been arrested and charged with a crime and served time in either jail or prison on at least two different occasions, one that caused them to serve time in Placer County Jail.

This setting allowed the participant some control of the environment and helped them feel comfortable disclosing their experiences within the criminal justice system. Additionally, interviewing at a location convenient to the participant increased the likelihood of the offender participating in the interview. Finally, the interview setting did significantly impact the outcome of the research results; therefore, whatever location was most conducive for the participant was used.

Participants

The participants in this study were repeat offenders with at least two previous convictions. Although all the participants needed at least two prior arrests and convictions, they may have served their incarceration at different correctional institutions. However, one of the convictions had to require the offender to serve time in Placer County Jail. For example, some participants may have done all their time at a local county jail, some may have served time at a state prison, and some may have served time at a combination of both institutions. The only requirement for the participants was that they have multiple convictions, with at least one in Placer County, California. This requirement was essential to ensure they had a common experience for the phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994). The group size was 10 participants, depending on the information gathered from the participants. This study recruited a convenience sample of at least ten students provided by the Placer County Probation Department with at least two prior arrests. The convenience sample was the most available sample of participants accessible to the researcher for the sample (Andrade, 2021). Additionally, obtaining participants who served their sentences from the same correctional facility allowed the researcher to receive information from participants who experienced programming within the facility.

Procedures

The first procedure needed to move forward with the interviews and data collection was to secure the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. During this phase, the steps were outlined to obtain enough participants to complete the research. The communication steps with the office of the Chief Probation Officer of the Placer County Probation Department were disclosed, and whatever actions were taken to contact the study participants. Placer County Probation officers were asked to provide the researcher's contact information to probationers within their caseloads with multiple arrests and convictions, not necessarily in Placer County.

The researcher provided an email and phone number for participants interested in participating in the research study.

The researcher ensured the probationers understood there was a small token available for participating in the study in the value of a \$15.00 Amazon gift card. Lastly, the researcher provided the participants with a certificate of appreciation for their time and contribution to the research study. The participants were told that they can use the certificate of appreciation however they see fit for their benefit.

The Researcher's Role

My role in this study was to conduct an internal Epoché process of my preconceived notions and other beliefs related to the criminal justice system. This process was essential for me to see the information presented to me as to why these participants continue to recidivate and not through a viewpoint already discovered through my previous experiences. The information the participants provided could be previously known or new information through the research process. It was critical to receive this information at face value to determine if it would benefit improving the criminal justice system. Additionally, the researcher needed to understand the process of Epoché thoroughly and get my mind to a place of understanding and acceptance of the information the participants provided during the interview.

Data Collection

The first part of data collection was determining how to collect data for this qualitative study. During the question preparation process, the researcher worked through preparing to collect data in Moustakas (1994). The first step was to formulate the question to focus on during the data collection process (Mousakas, 1994), How do repeat offenders describe their lived experiences after being released from custody in Placer County? The next part was determining

what had been researched about this topic through a literature review. After completing the literature review for this study, plenty of quantitative research showed the positive impact of inmate programming on the recidivism rate of offenders. However, this research focused on examining the lived experiences of offenders within Placer County, California. Additionally, the participants for this research were offenders with at least two convictions resulting in time in custody, some time served in Placer County, California. The next thing the researcher completed was developing questions for the study.

After the preparation for the data collection was complete, the researcher worked through the data collection process. First, the researcher engaged in the Epoché process to ensure they set aside any prejudgments and the participant's interview was unbiased and receptive (Moustakas, 1994). The next step was to bracket the question to ensure the researcher had eliminated any preconceptions and ensure the information obtained was not tainted (Tufford & Newman, 2010). The next part of the process explored the participants' lived experiences by conducting interviews using open-ended questions (Moustakas, 1994).

Interviews

For this research study, the researcher conducted in-person interviews with ten repeat offenders to examine their lived experiences while in custody within the criminal justice system. To adequately obtain the data, the researcher had to first find participants that were accessible and were willing to participate in the interview and provide information about their lived experiences that would contribute to the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher asked broad, open-ended questions during the interview to understand the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The responses provided by the participants will help find the

commonalities with the data and establish the creditability of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Before interviewing the participants, the researcher talked to each of them to explain the focus of the research. Specifically, the researcher was researching repeat offenders' experiences with the criminal justice system in Placer County and the programming offered to those offenders while they were in custody. To obtain the information needed for this research, the researcher examined the lived experiences of offenders who have spent time in the Placer County jail. The researcher sought to find out how they believe programming helped them during their transition into society upon their release or how it could have better met their specific needs. The researcher ensured all the participants' personally identifying information was kept confidential from public release to protect their privacy. For instance, instead of identifying each participant by their full name, age, and any other identifying information that would allow someone to identify them, the researcher used pseudonyms to identify each participant in the final dissertation. This change allowed the researcher to gather enough information to compare the lived experiences of offenders in custody but not disclose their identifying information. Additionally, maintaining confidentiality enabled the participants to openly share their experiences without fear of being easily identified.

The interviews began with an informal conversation to help break down any uneasy communication barriers between the interviewer and participants. The interview was conducted through standard, open-ended questions to ensure each interview was conducted the same way. However, some individual responses from the participant could elicit additional follow-up questions between the standard questions. Lastly, the interviewer was able to provide further details for information not discussed during the interview at the end. Although the interviewer

made every effort to maintain uniformity in the interviews, some of the participant's responses dictated additional follow-up questions.

The interview started with informal disclosures about the process to create a relaxed environment (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher thanked the participant for providing this information to improve inmate education programming during this time. The goal was to improve offenders' chances of reintegrating into society upon their release from custody. This interview took approximately 45 minutes and helped paint a clear picture of their experience in the criminal justice system. A significant focus of this interview was determining how inmate programming can be improved to help the offenders overcome their past and become successful members of society upon release.

The next part was the open-ended questions, which may not follow the format, depending on how the participants would like to disclose their lived experiences in Placer County, California. The researcher used the following interview guide to ensure the participants' experience was sufficiently uncovered with meaning and depth (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, the guide helped to obtain "...rich, vital, and substantiative descriptions..." (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116) of the participants' experience while in custody in Placer County, California.

1. In your own words, describe your experience with reoffending in the community?
2. Describe any challenges you experienced when you were released from custody back into the community?
3. Describe the situation with as much detail as possible when you decided to reoffend?
4. If you could turn back time, what would you do differently?
5. How do you perceive yourself, and what would have helped you overcome the challenges you faced?

6. Take a moment to reflect on your perception of reoffending in the community?
7. Can you tell me more about what it is like to reoffend in the community?
8. Describe your views about the factors that influenced your decision to reoffend?

The first question allowed the participant to uncover their lived experiences with reoffending in the community. The second question enabled the participant to describe any challenges they experienced when they were released from custody back into the community. This question was designed to get the participant thinking about what could have been different for them to become successful. Question three was designed to think of the bigger picture of the situation for the offender and the influences that caused them to re-offend. Question four allowed the participant to reflect on how they would do things differently. Question five allowed the participant to reflect on their decisions and how they overcame their challenges. Question six allowed the participant to evaluate their perception of offending in the community. Question seven asked the participant to take a deeper look at what it was like to reoffend in the community and to share any additional information about reoffending in the community after they have lived through their previous experiences in custody. The final question had the participant evaluate their views that influenced their decision to reoffend.

This line of questioning was not all-inclusive and was used as a foundation for questions to ask the participants. Each participant was asked to be available for a follow-up interview if additional questions were discovered through other interviews that would benefit the thoroughness of this research study. The initial interviews were all in person, but the follow-up questions may have been asked via telephone to make any follow-up more convenient for the participants.

Data Analysis

Through the transcendental methodology, the goal was to find the commonalities in the responses provided by the participants. The information was analyzed with the responses from the other participants within this study to find the common themes. These common themes helped determine ways programming can be delivered better to the participants while in custody in Placer County, California. The researcher used the steps Moustakas (1994) outlined to analyze the data and form a reasonable conclusion about the data through the data analysis process.

Bracketing or Epoché is a disciplined and systematic effort to set aside prejudgments about the phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994). During this initial part of the data analysis and throughout the data collection and analysis portion of this study, the researcher needed to bracket their views before conducting the interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The process of Epoché was setting aside any preconceived notions or, as Moustakas (1994) wrote, “to refrain from judgment to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” (p. 33). This step in the process of data allowed the researcher to look at the information presented at face value without any prejudgment (Moustakas, 1994). Through the initial Epoché process, the researcher bracketed through journaling and prayer to eliminate any biases about the participants’ information provided (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher spent a few minutes in quiet meditation and prayer to ensure they removed any biases and allowed the information the participants provided to be received as their lived experiences and not from the researcher’s own perceived notions of what it was like to live through their experiences.

Another critical component of the phenomenological research process was phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological reduction also includes

the external observations, internal consciousness, experiences, rhythm, and relationship between the phenomenon and the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). Through phenomenological reduction, the researcher described the experience in the textural language of the observation just as one sees it (Moustakas, 1994). The steps of phenomenological reduction are bracketing or Epoché, horizontalizing, clustering the horizons into themes, and organizing the horizons and themes into coherent textural descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The next step of horizontalizing was looking at the information at the same level obtained at every level throughout the research process (Moustakas, 1994). Horizontalizing includes looking at every perception through the research process with equal value (Moustakas, 1994). This process was essential to look at every participant in the research with equal value to ensure they provide the same amount of information to the research findings (Moustakas, 1994).

The next step was to cluster the horizons into themes or look at the commonalities. This process was taking the information obtained through the interviews and combining the common significant statements into common themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the common horizons were clustered into common themes during this step in the study (Moustakas, 1994).

The last step in the phenomenological reduction process was to organize the horizons into textural descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Through this process, the researcher described the phenomenon's meanings and essence from the participants' vantage point (Moustakas, 1994). The initial step of horizontalizing included all statements having equal value; however, as the research was analyzed in this final step, similar or overlapping statements were deleted (Moustakas, 1994).

Following phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation aimed to grasp the structural essences of the participants' experience (Moustakas, 1994). The process of imaginative

variation was a method the researcher used to examine how the phenomenon presented itself to the researcher's consciousness during the analysis portion of this study (Turley et al., 2016). The steps of imaginative variation include varying the underlying textural meanings to the structural meanings in the findings, reorganizing the underlying themes to account for the emergence of the phenomenon, considering the universal structure that uncovers thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon, and searching for examples of illustrations of constant themes to facilitate structural descriptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The final step was synthesizing the information obtained through the study and developing fundamental and structural descriptions into "...a unified statement of the essence of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). Although this process was not exhaustive, it included synthesis from the researcher's vantage point of this specific study, including the participants selected for this study (Moustakas, 1994).

Table 1*Moustakas Data Analysis Model*

Epoché	Phenomenological Reduction	Horizontalizing
		Reduction of participants' experiences to the invariant constituents
		Thematic clustering to create core themes
		Comparison of multiple data sources to validate invariant constituents
		Crafting individual textural descriptions of participants
	Imagination Variation	Construction of individual structural descriptions
		Construction of composite structural descriptions
	Essence	Synthesize information and develop fundamental and structured descriptions

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was validated through different strategies to corroborate the evidence presented (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The dependability of the research ensured that the research was conducted consistently and documented thoroughly (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Additionally, the researcher thoroughly documented the interviews for this research to accurately represent the participants' experiences through the criminal justice system in Placer County, California.

Credibility

The information obtained from the participants throughout this research process was thoroughly documented to confirm their credibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The original data and the interpretation of the research findings were maintained to validate the credibility of the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The information from the participants was obtained through lengthy interviews with plenty of time to become familiar with the setting and context (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Dependability and Confirmability

The researcher provided a detailed description of the research process and followed each step for each interview to maintain the research study's dependability. The researcher recorded the actions taken throughout the research process until complete (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To protect the research study from personal bias, the researcher documented his biases in this chapter and utilized journaling to make his biases known. This documentation helped with any anticipated projections to understand the phenomenon. Additionally, the researcher focused on the participants' lived experiences, even with the known biases noted through journaling.

Transferability

Although this study occurred in Placer County, California, the same research can be accomplished at any correctional institution to determine how inmate programming can be improved. Additionally, the findings within this research study can be transferred to other correctional institutions to implement inmate programming with offenders with similar backgrounds and needs to become contributing members of society upon their release from custody. The research was specific to participants within Placer County, California, and their needs through their lived experiences; however, the same improvements to inmate programming can be transferred to other correctional institutions.

Ethical Consideration

The first ethical consideration was the approval from the Placer County Probation Department to contact the repeat offenders to participate in the research study interview. The first step in reaching the participants included obtaining approval from the Placer County Probation Chief Probation Officer to interview probationers under his jurisdiction. When the participants contacted me, the researcher ensured they were willing participants in the study without any coercion or other promised benefits or threats of repercussions if they did not participate. When the information was collected from the participants, they signed a disclosure with clear instructions and expectations from the participant so there were no misinterpretations. Additionally, the participant selected the interview location to ensure they are most convenient to the participant and do not impact any conditions of their supervised release. All personally identifiable information was stored on a digitally stored file and password protected. Lastly, the findings of this study will be shared with law enforcement leaders to provide information about improving inmate programming within their jurisdiction.

Summary

The methods of research and how the data was collected and analyzed were detailed in this chapter. The study was conducted ethically, so the information in the findings is trustworthy. The steps found in Moustakas (1994) were used to create themes with the data, reduce the data by clustering themes of information, and ultimately synthesize the information into structural descriptions to find the phenomenon's essence.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative study aimed to describe the experiences of repeat offenders in Placer County, California, upon their release from custody and reentry into society. The sole objective of this chapter is to report the research findings. At the same time, Chapter Five will focus on the data interpretation, the results' implications, and additional research recommendations. The central research question for this study was:

Central Research Question (RQ): What are the lived experiences of repeat offenders under Placer County, California probation supervision?

The three guiding questions for this study are:

Guiding Question 1 (GQ 1): How do offenders describe their lived experiences as a repeat offender?

Guiding Question 2 (GQ 2): How do offenders describe the support or lack of support from correctional intervention?

Guiding Question 3 (GQ 3): How do offenders perceive the challenges experienced after being released back to the community?

This chapter presents the findings of this study, starting with an introduction of those who participated in the study. The following section will outline the themes and sub-themes generated through transcendental phenomenological data analysis. Lastly, the central research question and the three additional guiding questions were analyzed through a rich description of the participants' lived experiences.

Participants

The participants for this study were recruited through the Placer County Placer Reentry Program (PREP) center. The participants were all screened to ensure they had at least two prior offenses, with one offense leading to incarceration in Placer County Jail in Placer County, California. The following descriptions of the participants describe their experiences with re-offending in the community and their challenges when released back into the community. Quotes from the participants' interviews were used alongside the descriptions to describe the participants' experiences accurately. Additionally, pseudonyms were used for each participant to protect their anonymity.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Age Range	Criminal Offense(s)
Participant #1	Male	20-29	Illicit Drug Use
Participant #2	Male	30-39	Illicit Drug Use/ Domestic Violence
Participant #3	Male	40-49	Illicit Drug Use
Participant #4	Female	40-49	Domestic Violence
Participant #5	Male	20-29	Domestic Violence
Participant #6	Male	20-29	Domestic Violence
Participant #7	Male	20-29	Domestic Violence
Participant #8	Male	20-29	Illicit Drug Use
Participant #9	Female	30-39	Illicit Drug Use
Participant #10	Male	30-39	Illicit Drug Use

Participant #1

Participant #1 was in his late 20s and grew up in Southern California, and his offenses were centered around illicit drug use. Participant #1 started using drugs at 15 when he realized you could smoke heroin from a bong. Participant #1 related that one of his struggles with re-offending was because he felt he could not walk down the street without worrying if there would be a police officer in the neighborhood that would stop him. Participant #1 felt the correctional system was supportive of him while he was in custody but wished there was a plan presented to him while he was in custody. Participant #1 also said the wrap-around services he had recently started receiving would have been beneficial when he was first released.

Participant #2

Participant #2 was in his late 30s and was a disabled military veteran. Participant #2's offenses were centered around illicit drug use and domestic violence. Participant #2's challenges with re-offending included not having a good footing when he was released, such as not having a ride to his residence. One of the biggest challenges Participant #2 experienced was getting released back into the community without any resources. Overall, Participant #2 did not have a problem with earning income because of the military pension he received.

Participant #3

Participant #3 was in his early 40s and grew up in the greater Sacramento area, and his offenses were centered around illicit drug use. Participant #3 started using drugs in high school, which was the underlining cause of his crimes. Participant #3 struggled to find legitimate ways to make money, and often the only way was for him to re-offend. Participant #3 felt that if he had been offered some classes or rehabilitation by probation, it could have helped him not re-offend.

Participant #4

Participant #4 was in her 40s and grew up on the central coast of California but moved to the Placer County area. Participant #4's offenses involved domestic violence, which has caused her to have difficulty obtaining employment. Additionally, Participant #4 had challenges communicating with her legal counsel while she was in custody. Participant #4 also believed the correctional staff could have communicated more effectively.

Participant #5

Participant #5 was in his early 20s and grew up near Sacramento, California. Participant #5's offenses were centered around domestic violence. One of the challenges Participant #5 experienced was his mental illness when he was released. If Participant #5 did not take his prescribed medication, he did not do well when released. Participant #5 felt his anger was the biggest reason for his re-offense. When he started attending anger management classes, he made personal improvements that helped him stay out of custody. Participant #5 also said he would have benefitted from a safe shelter and a better support system when he was released from custody.

Participant #6

Participant #6 was in his early 20s, and his offenses are centered around domestic violence. Participant #6 struggled with the court-mandated classes restarting when he re-offended, making it harder for him to complete the requirements. Additionally, Participant #6 struggled to find housing and obtain employment when released. Participant #6 indicated there should be some grace while completing the court-mandated courses if the participant missteps. Essentially, he would have liked to complete the course from where he left off rather than restart from the beginning.

Participant #7

Participant #7 was in his early 20s, and his offenses were centered around illicit drug use. Participant #7 wanted to enter the military after high school but felt pressured by some of his family members to attend college. Although Participant #7 smoked weed in high school, he did not start using other illicit drugs until college. Participant #7 experienced challenges when he was on probation and did not feel they wanted him to succeed. Additionally, Participant #7 felt the court should have provided his mother with a protective order after their first incident, which would have made him not have the second incident.

Participant #8

Participant #8 was in his late 20s, and his offenses were centered around illicit drug use. Participant #8 had difficulty returning to the same place when he was released from custody because of the exposure to the people he used to use drugs with. He believed that if he had a different environment to go to after he was released, he might have been successful right when he was released. In addition to a new environment, Participant #8 felt he would have benefitted from a residential drug treatment before being released into society. Lastly, Participant #8 thought he should have been allowed to go to a treatment program rather than jail for his drug offenses.

Participant #9

Participant #9 was in her late 30s, and her offenses were centered around illicit drug use. When Participant #9 would get arrested, she got clean while she was in jail but then started using drugs again when she was released. Participant #9 had different experiences with two probation officers assigned to her case. Participant #9 struggled with legitimate ways to make money when

released from custody. However, Participant #9 had difficulty finding lawful ways to make money so she would end up back in custody.

Participant #10

Participant #10 was in his mid-30s, and his offenses were centered around drug use. Participant #10 struggled with homelessness and indicated he would get released from custody and have to go back to the homeless camps, where he was immediately exposed to the same drugs he was trying to avoid. Additionally, Participant #10 struggled to obtain gainful employment because he had difficulty getting a safe place to live and could not find a place to live because he had no money.

Results

The data collection method for this transcendental phenomenological study was semi-structured interviews. After the interviews were complete, the researcher utilized transcriptions to confirm the accuracy, aid in the data collection, and ensure bracketing to prevent biases from being introduced into the results. There were 113 pages of interview transcripts analyzed for the relevant data.

Through the data analysis and coding, three themes were identified. They will be discussed in this chapter: (a) *correctional environment*, (b) *reintegration into society when released*, and (c) *follow-up after release*. After thoroughly analyzing these themes, the researcher will address the central research question and the three guiding questions within this study.

Theme Development

This study utilized two methods for data collection and provided the necessary distinct data under its heading. Both methods – (a) semi-structured interview and (b) reflexive journaling provided distinct data for analysis. The interviews were the primary data source; however, the

reflexive journals were completed throughout the collection process to ensure the data's trustworthiness. The interviews were all audio recorded through a digital audio recorder or via Zoom web-conferencing software and transcribed through Trint.com transcription services. The researcher followed the protocols in Chapter 3, and after approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (See Appendix A), each audio-recorded interview and transcript was reviewed at least two times by the researcher to verify the accuracy. The interviews were coded to identify themes and sub-themes.

The researcher verified the accuracy of the data in the transcripts by reading the interview transcripts while listening to the recorded interviews. Corrections were made directly into the Trint.com document and copied into NVivo 12 software for analysis. The researcher identified themes during this initial reading and subsequent readings.

First Cycle Coding

The first cycle of coding was completed using the NVivo 12 software. Through NVivo, the interviews were categorized into different categories, or as Dhakal (2022) described them, as chunks of data in the dataset. Through this process, sections of each interview were selected and categorized into different nodes within the program (Dhakal, 2022). This allowed the researcher to go back through the coded interviews. During this initial coding process through NVivo, the researcher identified specific words used by the participants and ultimately viewed their lived experiences from their experiences as repeat offenders within Placer County.

Second Cycle Coding

Through the second coding cycle, several sub-themes were identified by reviewing the transcripts of the interviews after the initial coding process and analysis. Through this coding cycle, the frequent themes were organized within the codes developed during the first coding

cycle. The transcripts were fully coded during the second coding cycle while looking for emerging codes from the information provided during the interviews, as described in Raskind et al. (2019).

Themes

Table 3

Themes and Related Codes

Themes	Sub-Themes
Correctional Environment	Access to Programming While in Custody Job Training and Job Placement in Custody Support from Law Enforcement
Reintegration into Society	Housing Release Times Wrap Around Services
Follow-up When Released	Rehabilitation as an Alternate to Jail Non-Court Connected Classes and Counseling Mental Health Care

Correctional Environment

The correctional environment was identified as a main theme in this study. Throughout the interviews, several participants described their experiences in the correctional environment as hurting their chance of success when they were released from custody. The theme of the correctional environment was divided into sub-themes: access to programming while in custody, job training and job placement in custody, and support from law enforcement.

Access to Programming While in Custody. When the correctional environment was considered, one theme that developed from the interviews was the offender's ability to complete many different types of programming while in custody. Often, offenders were mandated to complete court-ordered classes when released from custody. One of the developed subthemes was the ability of the offender to work on these classes before they were released.

Participant #2 indicated it would have been a benefit for him to complete his court-ordered classes while he was still in custody. He described his experience as the following: "...whatever court-ordered classes we're going to have while we're in custody, I think we should have the opportunity to take advantage of these classes while we're in there and get them taken care of that." If the offender could complete these classes while in custody, they could do other productive things when released into society.

Participant #3 felt he would have benefitted from classes to help him not re-offend. Participant #3 described his experience as follows: "I was never sent by probation or parole to any kind of classes to help reoffending. I was never given any kind of something like that. It's just that you get released. And good luck to you." Participant #3 felt that some help from the county on ways he could make money instead of reoffending would have been helpful. Another point that Participant #3 recommended was a class for offenders about a month before they are

released to provide resources to them. He recommended the following: “They have some kind of class that will prep you, get a resumé going for you, cover letter, job interview skills, and then you have jobs in place for these guys to go interview.”

Job Training and Job Placement in Custody. One of the challenges described by participants in this study was the ability to get a job when they were released from custody. Through the coding process, the need for job placement was an identified theme that could benefit the offenders to be successful when released from custody. The job placement, in conjunction with job training, could provide training and resources to the offenders to access jobs they are qualified for or connect the participant with an employer looking for their specific job skills.

Participant #2 had difficulty finding a job when he was released from custody. Participant #2 was a disabled veteran but also has a felony conviction which made it difficult for him to get employment. He described his experiences as follows: “You have a really hard time finding actual like legal ground for work and things that are above board to make money.”

Participant #3 had trouble finding a job when he was released from custody. He thought job placement for offenders would improve the criminal justice system. He said, “. . .back then, it was just really hard to get a job.” He thought the state could benefit from a program to get offenders placed with the California Department of Transportation to help them find gainful employment, not re-offend, and help the state with staffing.

Participant #4 indicated she experienced a difficult time finding a job, even at a fast-food restaurant. She said she previously had a job but was fired after her employer ran a background check. She described her experience as the following:

I cannot find a job even for a fast-food joint. It's ridiculous how strong background check they went. They went into detail into my community service, how many days I stayed in

jail, how many hours of community service I had to do. And it, just like I became no longer a candidate, and I'm like, It's fast food. Like, how low can you go? You know, that's the lowest of the totem pole for jobs to me. You know what I mean? And just like, I can't even get a fast-food job...

Participant #4 indicated that job placement would benefit her along with other services, such as a point of contact to help her find other services when released from custody.

Participant #5 struggled to find employment when he was released. He applied for a job and was invited to continue the hiring process until they ran a background check. As soon as the background check was complete, he was released from the position. Participant #5 worked for an employer for a few years when they conducted an additional background check and fired him. Participant #5 stated, “And they told me that it's unacceptable and they can't hire me over it or they can't keep me on because of it.” Participant #5 indicated he would have benefited from a job placement program to overcome the denial of jobs because of his background.

Participant #6 indicated he could have benefitted from assistance getting employment. His criminal background prevented him from being able to get a job when he was released. Participant #6 described his experience: “I'm like, you know, my record has some pretty extensive things behind it, and it makes it really hard. People look at me kind of like, I don't know if I want you working in my establishment....” Participant #6 indicated it took him being personally connected to someone at an employer before he could get a job. Participant #6 thought that if the job placement program included someone giving the offender a word of recommendation, it would benefit the offender to be successful when released from custody.

Participant #7 experienced a difficult time finding employment when he was released from custody. Participant #7 stated, “You might have a good record or not a record, but like good

work experience, the jobs don't want to hire you because you have a felony." If a job placement program had been in place to assist Participant #7 in finding a job that would hire him even with his criminal history, it would have helped him succeed when he was released from custody.

Participant #10 experienced a hard time finding a place to live because he cannot find a job since being released from custody. As a result of Participant #10's struggles, he felt that the only way for him to get food was to commit another offense. Participant #10 described his experience: "Well, when I got released, I'd be hungry and not have anything to eat or whatever. So, I basically, and I'm going shoplifting and being in a situation where I was trespassing somewhere, sleep." Participant #10 indicated that if he had found a job when he was released through a job placement program, the transition to living in society would have been easier.

Support from Law Enforcement. Three participants in this study indicated difficulty receiving support from the correctional staff while in custody. The communication method used in correctional facilities is referred to as a kite. This was the mechanism an inmate used when they needed services within the jail, such as education, programming, or medical assistance. Some participants indicated it was difficult to use the kite method of communication because the correctional staff needed to be more supportive.

Participant #4 indicated there should be more support from the correctional staff within the jail. She felt that the support would help the offenders be more successful upon their release. She stated the following,

...when I was in jail, I couldn't communicate if I were to ask the guards for a kite, I would get denied and they would say, I'm sorry, we don't have no kites. I had one guard in Auburn tell me it must suck to be you. You know, and the guards at that particular jail treated you as inmate. You had no name. You had not even an inmate number, you know,

and that's what they identify you as, you know, is like inmate. Like, I understand they have a job to do, but they dehumanize you.

Participant #6 believed the correctional staff needed to be more receptive to the offender's requests for services while in custody. His experience was that the correctional staff were inattentive to the inmate's needs when requesting medical services, books, and other items. He described his experience as the following:

It's really, really, really horrible. And in the jails, it's even worse because the guards, they don't really care, there's only ever one or two guards. Every time I've been in jail that are cool, that you can't be like, Hey, you know, and they will make sure it gets done, but you take that guard, and he doesn't work for two days, and you get two days full of guards. They don't deliver the kites like regularly like they're supposed to. They do it really half-assed, really, really, really, really bad, Um—even psychiatry. Kites, the doctor kites, anything. Anything, getting a book, getting anything, any amount of anything, any answers in there, is almost extremely difficult.

Participant #6 indicated that additional support from jail staff would have helped him get the services needed when he was released.

Participant #7 described a negative experience with probation when he was released from custody. He said he felt as though probation did not want him to succeed when released.

Participant #7 described his experience as follows:

...it feels like they don't want you to leave them, you know, and they don't want you to succeed. But, um, I guess it's just you just got to figure out on your own how to do everything. I know they give you like probation gives you ways to succeed, but they're not always that helpful.

Reintegration into Society.

In addition to the services obtained while in custody for the offenders to make the transition more successful, the next challenge for many was the reintegration phase back into society. This phase of the process was when the offenders transitioned from being in custody to living as a member of society. The themes discovered during this phase were housing, release times from custody, and wrap-around services.

Housing. Seven of the ten interviewed candidates indicated they struggled with housing when released from custody. Before their arrest, a few struggled with homelessness and felt that returning to the homeless community was detrimental to their successful reintegration into society. Some participants also noted the challenge of obtaining housing because their criminal record was discovered during the background check.

Participant #1 struggled to find safe housing when he was released from custody. One of the struggles he experienced was only being able to stay at someone's house if you had a pocket full of drugs for them. However, many people would not allow him to stay in their house if he had no drugs. He described this experience as the following:

You know, like the only way it's, you know, you can stay at anyone's house with a pocketful of drugs like anyone will invite you in you when you don't have anything like you're, you're probably going to have to sleep at the park.

Participant #2 indicated he could not pass a background check and was denied housing multiple times. He described his challenge: "A lot of people are released with no place to go live, no funds whatsoever." When he described the challenge of finding housing with a criminal record, Participant #2 said, "Just the record being on there, you still can't find a place because they won't rent to you if you have a felony."

Participant #5 had a place to go when he was released from custody; however, he did not feel it was a safe environment. He indicated that returning to the same place he was staying when he was arrested was not conducive to his success. Participant #5 described his housing challenge: “So one of the biggest challenges that I experienced when I was released from custody and coming back to the community was definitely not having anywhere safe to go.” One of the solutions discussed with Participant #5 was the possibility of going to transitional housing until he could find a safer place to live.

Participant #6 had struggled with homelessness before his arrest and struggled to find housing since his release from custody. Participant #6 described his challenges with his extensive criminal record as the following:

There's not really anything left, you know, like my situation right now, I'm not even sure where I'm going to go tonight, but like, you know prop can only do so much, and they have so many programs, they can only help so much because they only have so much money to help with. But it made it extremely difficult for me to get a place right now. I'm like, you know, my record has some pretty extensive things behind it, and it makes it really hard.

When Participant #6 referred to “prop,” he was referring to the wraparound services provided due to California Proposition 47 (State of California, 2022).

Participant #7 experienced challenges finding housing when he was released from custody. He said the felony on his record prohibited him from getting safe places to flourish when he was released. He described his experience: “I can only say just when you have a felony, it’s hard to do things. It’s hard to get another apartment or house, harder for people to trust you again.”

Participant #8 described an experience of going back to the same house he lived in when he was arrested. This caused him to return to the same bad choices he made when arrested.

Participant #8 described his experience as follows:

The hard part for me was, you know, going back to the same place that, you know, that I've lived in, that, you know, I end up. You know, doing the same things over and over again and, you know, just. You know, me knowing the same people and, you know, using drugs in that same kind of community and just not having like a place to live that where it's like, you know, there's healthy living on like a healthy environment. And so I basically felt like I was destined to fail.

Participant #9 was homeless at the time of his offense but experienced additional challenges by not having a safe place to go when he was released. He said, “And at the most of the time, I was homeless, so I didn't really have nothing but a bunch of friends that weren't good for me.” He also said, “You know, like some people go to jail because they're homeless and they don't have food, so they go to jail so they can get their three meals a day, you know, and it's crazy.”

Participant #10 elected to go to a rehabilitation facility and then to a transition house upon release. This allowed Participant #10 to secure safe housing for some time. However, when he was nearing the end of his six-month rehabilitation stint, he did not have anywhere safe to go. He described his experience as the following:

Well, it's kind of hard to find somewhere to live when you got no money. It's hard to find a job because you just got out of custody. But I was lucky that I decided to go to rehab and then go from rehab to a transition house. So basically, my housing has been taken

care of the last almost six months, but now pretty soon, I am going to have to find somewhere to live, so I am saving for that.

Release Times. Four participants in this study indicated that the release times from custody attributed to them reoffending when they were released from custody. The participants found that the time of their release from custody affected whether they could make a favorable decision not to re-offend when released. This was impacted by the ability to find safe housing, get a ride from the jail, and enter a rehabilitation program.

Participant #1 had trouble when he was released from custody in the early morning hours. He indicated that his only choice at that hour was to commit another offense to get back to where he needed to be. Participant #1 described his experience: "...you were released at two o'clock in the morning with nowhere to go in the middle of nowhere. Half the time. And what are you supposed to do?"

Participant #2 described his challenges with release times when he said, "I think that when we get released, we don't really have any type of good footing that we put on to get released at a reasonable time and not always allowed to reach out and make contact with anyone..." Participant #2 said that he was released at 6:00 in the morning in Sacramento County without any clothing except for a see-through suit the jail staff gave him. He felt the lack of dignity, along with the release time, caused frustration in him and ultimately attributed to him committing additional crimes due to his frustration.

Participant #5 described a challenge associated with the timing; however, it differed from other participants. Participant #5 felt that getting released in the morning would have been better for him to find somewhere to stay when released in the morning. He described his experience as the following:

Like I would, I would always go back to the streets and you know, they would always like they would always release me in the afternoon, like barely ever did I get released in the morning. So in the afternoon, I couldn't really get into the shelter. You find anywhere to go, so, you know, I was always on the streets in a tent or, you know, started doing drugs, and you know, when I was wanting to get clean, I would just go right back to the streets and start using and stuff.

Participant #10 indicated that the release times impacted his ability to be successful when he was released from custody. Participant #10 indicated that getting released early in the morning was not conducive to his success when released. He described it as the following:

We'll need a ride somewhere. A type of thing like that would be more helpful versus just kicking somebody loosely, like six o'clock in the morning, not knowing where they're going to go more than like they're going to go re-offend.

Wrap-Around Services. In California, one of the outcomes of Proposition 47 was the requirement for public agencies to provide mental health services, substance use disorder treatment, and diversion programs (State of California, 2022). Additional legislation required extra grant money to be given to local jurisdictions for housing assistance, job skills training, case management, and other programs (California, 2022). Throughout this research, wraparound services associated with Proposition 47 were a topic of discussion for five participants.

Participant #1 experienced great success with the assistance of the personnel assigned to the wrap-around services associated with Proposition 47. He described his experience as follows, “I had Prop 47, which without Prop 47. I mean, I just graduated like three months ago, and like, they helped me tremendously without, like the programs I was in. I don't know if I would have got here.” After years of failed treatment programs, Participant #1 experienced success with the

wrap-around services associated with Proposition 47. He said, “I feel like Prop 47 was like, it saved my life.”

Participant #4 indicated she thought the wrap-around services associated with Proposition 47 would have benefitted her. For example, Participant #4 indicated she would have benefitted from a transition program, and somewhere she could go for help when she was released. She said, “There’s no programs, no transition programs, there is nowhere to go for help. You ask for help, and nobody knows anything because there isn’t anything.” Proposition 47 provides the offenders with a specific point of contact for the required services, which would have helped Participant #4 when she was released.

Participant #6 indicated that he benefitted from Proposition 47 wraparound services but thought he could use additional resources. Participant #6 said:

I'm not even sure where I'm going to go tonight, but like, you know prop can only do so much, and they have so many programs, they can only help so much because they only have so much money to help with. But it made it difficult for me to get a place right now.

However, he did indicate that Proposition 47 provided him with a way to get diapers and wipes for his child when he was released.

Participant #8 said he was doing good since starting the services with his Proposition 47 groups but also wishes he could have started sooner. Participant #8 described his experience as the following:

I probably would have, you know, benefited from it earlier, but I feel like maybe, you know, maybe I wasn't ready for that change yet, but you know. In the past, but like. You know, I definitely feel like, you know, now with a lot of the resources that I've gotten help with, through Prop 47 have helped me.

Participant #9 benefitted greatly from the services associated with Proposition 47. She indicated that the services were the only reason she could get off drugs. Participant #9 described her experience with the wrap-around services associated with Proposition 47:

They've been like my whole superhero plan. Like, I, you know, I wanted to do good. I wanted to be like clean and sober and get my house and all that. And they made it possible like they really did.

Follow-up When Released

In addition to preparing the offenders for release, one main theme identified was the additional follow-up services provided when they are back in society. For instance, some offenders thought a rehabilitation alternative to jail would help them overcome their addiction or other offenses when released back into the community. Other offenders thought counseling services not connected to the court would be beneficial so they could be more honest with their counselor without fearing being sent back to jail. Lastly, the need for mental health care when offenders are released from custody was a need identified when they were released from custody.

Rehabilitation as an Alternate to Jail. Four of the ten offenders interviewed for this research had previous drug offenses. Ultimately, many of these offenders chose to reoffend because they needed to continue their drug habit. When considering how to reintegrate into society effectively, many offenders went to rehabilitation to help overcome their addictions. However, some offenders felt that rehabilitation should be more proactively offered to offenders with similar offenses. The rehabilitation process was also not conducive to offenders who relapse during the process, as many times, they are released from whatever facility they are in.

Participant #1 was in a rehabilitation facility and admitted to messing up while he was there. However, he was not given any grace; instead, he was excused from the program. He

described his experience, “I messed up, and like they just kicked me out. It's a weird system where, you know, like you're in rehab, but if you mess up, you're gone.” At the time, Participant #1 was in rehabilitation and was serious about recovering from his drug addiction. However, after being released from the program, he did not attempt to restart a rehabilitation program for another year. He said, “But, like, when I got kicked out, I was gone for a year before you even gave it another shot, and I was really serious about it.”

Participant #3 attempted to go to rehabilitation many times but indicated that the programs often have drugs inside them. Hence, it was difficult to get clean when he was constantly exposed to drugs. He also said that the user has to decide to accept the treatment before it will work for them and does not believe the rehabilitation programs work for everyone. He described one of his experiences with rehabilitation as follows: “But you're just surrounded by a bunch of drug addicts, and 99 percent don't want to get clean, and most of the rehabs have dope in them.”

Participant #8 indicated that rehabilitation helped him overcome his addictions. However, he felt that rehabilitation was never pushed on him, so he never got into it. He said an improvement to offering rehabilitation could have been the following, “I think they could have been a little more proactive on offering residential treatment and just help with rehabilitation, like just basic information on that....”

Participant #10 had a positive experience with rehabilitation as he went to a live-in treatment house when he was released from custody. One challenge Participant #10 faced while he was in rehabilitation was that he discovered that only three months of his six-month stay in housing was covered, so he had to find a way to pay for the remaining three months.

Non-Court Connected Counseling. One developed theme was the need for counseling not connected to the court when the offenders were released from custody. This idea would have allowed the offenders to get the assistance they need without punitive punishment when they have missteps through the counseling process. Additionally, if the counselor was not connected to the court they could not impose a punitive penalty for mistakes throughout the process. If the counselors were not connected, the offenders would be more honest with the counselor and get the needed help.

Participant #1 felt that a counselor not connected to the court would motivate him to do better with his rehabilitation process. Participant #1 thought he would be more open and honest with the counselor if the court did not send the counselor. He wrote, "...so I like if someone came out at different as like, no, we're not connected to the court. We're just trying to help. Like, it might actually do some good."

Participant #3 indicated that if they had someone to get help from throughout their rehabilitation process that was not connected to the court, they may be more honest with them and get the needed help. Participant #3 explained his idea, "...maybe that counselor that's not connected with probation or parole. So you can actually tell them, you know, what's really going on in your life without getting in trouble?"

Participant #6 explained that he thought that the court's involvement in his rehabilitation process decreased his chances of success. He experienced a challenge with court-connected programming and felt that counseling connected to the court could have the same negative impact. He described his experiences with the court-ordered classes by the following:

Well, when I re-offended, they didn't just like, you know, like, oh, you re-offended, we're going to violate you, do your 30 days, continue with your classes, the DA actually went

as far as resetting my classes. So I had already been done with half my 52-week program. They went as far as resetting and restarting my entire program and to give me more community service that I had already completed and stuff. Just they made it really extremely difficult when I first got out...

Participant #7's offenses centered around illicit drug use. Since he has been released from custody, he has found the most significant benefit from going to Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings that are not connected to the court. Participant #7 described his experience: "I go to NA meetings every Friday all on my own. It's not sanctioned by the court or anything." He said the NA meetings and anger management classes have helped him get on the right track since release. **Mental Health Care.** Another theme that evolved from the interviews was the need for mental health care for the offenders. Some participants felt that getting mental health care was a determining factor in staying on the right track when released. Additionally, they felt this was one less challenge for them to overcome when released from custody.

Participant #1 experienced struggles over the years getting the necessary medication when he was released from custody. However, he had the prescription needed since he was released from Placer County Jail. He said, "I was able to get the medications I needed in Placer County." Participant #1 felt that having his medication has helped him stay on the right track since being released from custody.

Participant #2 indicated that he dealt with mental health issues when released. He described his experience as having to numb his mental pain with continued drug use, but some psychological help may have helped him overcome it. Participant #2 stated, "Well, you don't want to commit suicide, but you want to live. So you just got numb yourself. And then when you're on drugs, it's just going to get even greater chances of re-offending."

Participant #8 indicated he would have benefitted from mental health care when released. He felt that getting mental health treatment would have prevented him from getting into more trouble. Participant #8 described his experiences: “I probably should have, you know, focused and gotten help for my mental health before, you know, everything got out of control and then, you know. I think that would have definitely helped me, helped prevent me from, you know, getting into those situations.”

Research Question Responses

RQ 1: *What are the lived experiences of the repeat offenders under Placer County, California probation supervision?*

The answer to the questions in each interview was focused on the lived experiences of repeat offenders under Placer County, California probation supervision. During the interview, the participants were asked specific questions about their previous experiences to ensure they had at least one offense within Placer County, California. Additionally, the participants provided information in their responses to the questions about their experiences with Placer County Probation upon release.

GQ 1: How do offenders describe their lived experiences as a repeat offender?

The researcher conducted a thorough analysis of the data from this study and identified three main themes to address the research question: *(a) the correctional environment; (b) reintegrating into society; and (c) follow-up when released*. The researcher conducted a thorough data analysis of the interviews and developed three subthemes for the *correctional environment*. The following sub-themes emerged from the analysis: *access to programming while in custody, job training and job placement in custody, and support from law enforcement*. The second main theme identified was *reintegrating into society*, and the subthemes supporting this main theme were *housing, release times, and wrap-around services*. The researcher reviewed the data associated with the third main theme, *follow-up when released*, and three additional subthemes

that emerged from the analysis. The additional subthemes identified were rehabilitation as an alternate to jail, non-court connected counseling, and mental health care.

GQ 2: How do offenders describe the support or lack of support from correctional intervention?

The participants answered the second guiding question by describing their experiences as repeat offenders. Specifically, the main theme of the participants' experiences in the correctional environment was centered around the support or lack of support from correctional intervention. However, the two other main themes, reintegrating into society and follow-up when released, also described the participants' lived experiences with correctional intervention after they were released. Specifically, the wrap-around services and the correctional intervention some offenders received after being released from custody. Additionally, the subtheme of mental health care was specific to services provided after the offender was released. However, it started while the participant was in custody and continued to be provided as a service when they reintegrated into society.

GQ 3: How do offenders perceive the challenges experienced after being released back to the community?

The third guiding question was answered through the two main themes and subsequent sub-themes developed through the analysis. Specifically, the responses received through the interviews were analyzed and evolved into reintegrating into society and follow-up when released. These two main themes were further analyzed, and developed three sub-themes for each main theme. The first main theme was reintegration into society, and the sub-themes were housing, release times, and wrap-around services. The next main theme was follow-up when released, and the sub-themes were rehabilitation alternative to jail, non-court connected classes and counseling, and mental health care.

Summary

This chapter described the ten participants' lived experiences with re-offending in the community. Following the descriptions, a narrative description of the three themes and the sub-themes was included. After the participants' descriptions, the study results were explained and organized by the primary research question and three guiding questions. The themes and subthemes were connected to the research questions to present the results of this phenomenological study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

Understanding the lived experiences of repeat offenders will assist in developing effective programs to help them transition to society when released. The researcher sought to understand the participants' lived experiences as repeat offenders, the support received from correctional intervention, and the challenges the offenders experienced when they were released from custody and back into the community. This chapter provided methodological and practical implications of this study's findings, examined the study's delimitations and limitations, and provided recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The researcher gathered a thick, rich description of the participants' lived experiences using phenomenology. Specifically, bracketing through transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) was used to remove me from the experience described by the participants in the study. The researcher coded the interview transcripts and identified three main themes and nine sub-themes. The three main themes were (a) correctional environment; (b) reintegration into society; and (c) follow-up when released. All three main themes applied to the central research question; one applied to GC1, and the other to GC2 and GC3. The nine sub-themes emerged from the main themes to further understand the lived experiences of the participants lived experiences as repeat offenders in Placer County, California.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of repeat offenders under Placer County, California probation supervision?

All the participants indicated difficulty in various phases of their incarceration while in Placer County. Through each of the participant's interviews, they detailed their lived experiences within the criminal justice system in Placer County. Although some of the experiences differed from others, the main topic was the participants' reintegration into society. Additionally, when released, many offenders experienced difficulty providing their basic needs, such as employment and housing.

Guiding Question One

How do offenders describe their lived experiences as a repeat offender?

Some of the participants indicated they struggled to acquire services while they were in custody, some participants indicated struggles when they transitioned to living in society, and some indicated they required additional follow-up when released. Many participants offered information about how they could have benefitted from change to the process at one of the three main themes. The support of law enforcement was a theme while the participants were in the custody of the Placer County Jail. Some participants indicated that the lack of support from law enforcement affected their ability to communicate with jail staff and obtain the needed services.

Guiding Question Two

How do offenders describe the support or lack of support from correctional intervention?

One of the main themes that developed was the participants' experiences in the correctional environment. Through this theme, three sub-themes were developed: access to programming while in custody, job training and job placement, and law enforcement support.

Through the interviews, the participants described their experiences while in custody that ultimately hindered their success when they were released.

Guiding Question Three

How do offenders perceive the challenges experienced after being released back to the community?

The participants identified many different struggles when they were released from custody. The three sub-themes identified during reintegration were finding housing, the time the offender was released, and wrap-around services. In addition to those themes, follow-up when released was another main theme, with rehabilitation as an alternative to jail, non-court-connected classes and counseling, and mental health care as the sub-themes. During this portion, many offenders struggled with drug offenses and indicated that a plan that included grace would have benefitted them. For instance, the participants would have preferred to be able to get into a drug treatment program rather than go back to jail if they were in a treatment program. The non-court connected classes and counseling would allow the offenders to get the help they need if they could be more open with their counselor if they did not have to worry about punitive punishment after a misstep in the process.

Discussion

This transcendental phenomenological study was intended to explore the lived experiences of repeat offenders under Placer County, California, probation supervision. The theoretical framework for this study was Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and motivation theory (1943). The researcher chose transcendental phenomenology as the research design and chose the participants through criterion sampling. After the participants were selected, they were interviewed using semi-structured interview questions. The researcher also completed reflexive

journaling to assist the researcher with bracketing during the confirmation and analysis of the interviews. In the following sections, the researcher will detail the findings related to the empirical and theoretical literature and analyze how this study's literature review supported or conflicted with the current peer-reviewed literature.

Empirical Literature

Correctional Environment

The participants in this study indicated a significant challenge associated with the correctional environment and their chance of success when they were released from custody. The offenders the researcher interviewed during this study were participants in court-ordered classes to help them transition back into society. One of the sub-themes developed was the need for the participants to be able to complete these classes while they were still in custody. This theme supported the findings of Bozick (2018) that offenders participating in educational programs are less likely to re-offend when released. However, Bozick (2018) found it insignificant to the offenders' likelihood of finding post-release employment. Additionally, some of the participants indicated the need for job training and job placement while they are in custody. Adding job training and job placement while they are in custody could assist them obtain gainful employment when released.

Reintegration into Society

Another challenge associated with the participant's likelihood of success was when they reintegrated into society. Specifically, the ability of the offender to obtain housing was one of the most significant findings in this research. This was experienced by 8 of the 10 participants in this study. This supported the idea found in Clark (2016) that when offenders have secure housing when they are released from custody, they are more likely to be successful when released.

Follow-up When Released

One of the main themes identified during the interviews of the participants in this study was the follow-up care when released. Some offenders received wrap-around services due to Proposition 47 and indicated that the services received increased their chance for success. Mental health care was a challenge associated with some participants in this study. This idea supported the findings in Han (2020) that behavioral health services reduce the offender's likelihood of reoffending when released.

Theoretical Literature

The theoretical framework for this study was the Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1943). As Jones (2004) described, when offenders meet the basic survival needs found in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the offender can move to the fifth and final stage of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and become productive, law-abiding members of society. However, as was found in this study, the first four levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory are challenging for many offenders to achieve when they are released from custody with a criminal record. The participants in this study indicated they struggled finding jobs and housing when they were released.

One of these challenges often affects the other because it is difficult to find a job without housing, and without an address, it is difficult to find a job. Seven of the ten participants indicated some form of a struggle with employment when released from custody. Jones (2004) also showed through his research that when the first level (physical) of needs is unmet, the individual will spend a lot of time and energy ensuring these needs are met. This theme of housing supported the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs Theory that the offenders had difficulty overcoming their offenses when the basic needs of survival were not met.

Another seven of the participants indicated they had difficulty finding housing when they were released from custody. This was mainly because many did not want to return to the same environment they were in when they were arrested. However, some indicated they could not pass a background check for many places they were trying to live. The release time was also an identified challenge, whereas many offenders had to make poor choices to get to safety when released from custody. These themes supported the Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1943), as the offenders would do whatever was needed when they were released to ensure their needs were met.

Five of the participants indicated they received wrap-around services when released that have helped them not re-offend when released. The participants identified these services as ways to get diapers for their children when released, while others mentioned the ability to obtain transitional program support when released. These services contributed to the offenders' physiological and safety needs, the first two needs identified by Maslow (1943). The wrap-around services were provided through a controversial proposition in California that also decriminalized many felony offenses. Although this researcher sees the wrap-around services provided as good, the negative consequences of decriminalizing many offenses and subsequently increased property crimes in California are not (Bird, 2018). However, the Hierarchy of Needs Theory was supported by the themes developed by the participants in this study.

Implications

This transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of repeat offenders lived experiences within Placer County, California. Several theoretical, empirical, and practical implications emerged from this research. Implications for correctional institution leaders, transitional program coordinators, and public policy makers surfaced through the lived

experiences of repeat offenders in Placer County, California. These implications should be used to assist those in positions to improve the transitional programs for offenders to make the transition to society more prosperous.

Empirical

This study's findings advance the idea of transitional support for offenders when released from custody. Policymakers are often bound by the fiscal constraints of applying additional programs for offenders when released. However, the participants in this study indicated that many of the challenges associated with their offenses led them to commit additional crimes to meet their basic needs. The participants' lived experiences support the need for further research into transitional programs to assist the offender's transition into society when released. These programs include job training and placement, transitional housing, wrap-around services when released. Additionally, the offenders need a specific point of contact and additional studies around counseling and rehabilitation not connected to the court. Even as far back as President Lyndon Johnson, the United States has looked at ways to rehabilitate offenders in custody to increase their chances of success when released (Palmer, 2015; Schorb, 2014; Ray et al., 2017; Bosma et al., 2016).

Another empirical implication was the positive impacts of wrap-around services of Proposition 47 from the participants' lived experiences with it. However, the implications of Bird et al. (2018) do not fully support the proposition. Specifically, the wrap-around services may benefit this group of participants; Bird et al. (2018) found that Proposition 47 contributed to the rise in property crimes such as vehicle theft. Additionally, Bird et al. (2018) found that the concerns with Proposition 47 were that reduction in penalties for many crimes and prohibits the court from inducing offenders to participate in treatment programs for mental health care or

substance abuse treatment programs. This implication does support the need for wrap-around services such as those provided through Proposition 47 to better help the offenders when they are released from custody.

Theoretical

This study explored the challenges experienced by repeat offenders in Placer County, California, when they were released from custody. The findings indicated that some challenges including the correctional environment, reintegration into society, and follow-up when released influenced the participants' decision to re-offend when released. Maslow (1943) described the basic needs to survive as food and water. When the offenders transition back to society without the ability to meet these needs they revert to the ways they know, committing crimes. However, the other services within the correctional environment may provide additional alternatives to the offenders when released.

When Sonterblum (2016) researched basic needs, the findings focused on the offenders' gang involvement because their basic needs were not met in other ways. However, the same principle can apply when drug offender does not have the means to provide income and housing for themselves because of their criminal history. This struggle can result in the offender reverting to the life they know and committing additional crimes.

The Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1943) best describes the struggle for offenders' challenges when released from custody. If the offenders can meet their basic needs, they could be deterred from falling back into a life of crime. This study showed that when offenders do not have the means to provide for their basic needs, they experience challenges when deciding whether or not to re-offend.

Practical

This study helped identify ways to improve an offender's ability to succeed in society when released from custody. The practical implications of this study are significant to several stakeholders that assist offenders in overcoming their offenses and become successful members of society. These stakeholders include law enforcement administrators, education administrators, transitional program coordinators, judges in the court system, and rehabilitation facility managers.

Law enforcement administrators have the ability, through their positions of influence to partner with education administrators to provide programming in correctional institutions to facilitate improved offender success when released from custody. Specifically, when offenders experience challenges within the correctional environment, law enforcement leaders should partner with education system leaders to improve programming operations within the correctional setting. Many offenders will receive court mandated programming when released but would like to begin these programs while they are still in custody. This transition should be an easy solution, as many classroom programs are already offered within the correctional setting. Additionally, one of the challenges identified was job training and placement while in custody, including providing services to implement a job training/placement program. The last implication in the correctional setting identified was the support from law enforcement, which included the attitude of correctional officers in the correctional setting. This implication is a cultural issue that will require the leadership team within the correctional environment to look at the culture within the correctional institution and how the correctional officers can better support the offenders' success.

The transitional program coordinators must also examine the programs to help offenders successfully transition into society. Specifically, program coordinators should attempt to address the inability of offenders to find housing, look at the times offenders are released from custody, and provide additional wrap-around services that may help the offenders successfully transition from living in custody to being successful members of society. Whether providing housing for the offenders or assisting them in searching for and successfully obtaining housing, the transitional program can help the offenders get into safe housing in different ways. In addition to housing, some offenders had other trouble when released from custody. Operationally, there could be challenges within the correctional facility, but transitional program coordinators should consider collaborating with law enforcement administrators to accommodate release time requests when possible. Lastly, transitional program coordinators should seek opportunities to provide wrap-around services to offenders to help their continued success when released. Some offenders mentioned the wrap-around services they received due to California Proposition 47. Although this proposition allowed the funding for such services to be implemented within the counties, there are other ways the administrators should consider incorporating these services into the transitional program, without the need for additional legislation.

The last set of implications related to the offenders' follow-up when released from custody. The stakeholders affected by this implication are the transitional program administrators, the judges in the court system, and mental health care professionals. The challenges experienced by the offenders included rehabilitation, a recommendation for non-court related connected counseling, and mental healthcare when released. These challenges should take a change in mindset by the stakeholders implementing the programming when the offender is released from custody. Specifically, the rehabilitation facility administrators will have to

recognize a misstep when an offender needs to be excused from a program versus when they backslide through their recovery process; and determine the most appropriate method to ensure success for all involved. The non-court-related counseling will take a shift in mindset by those charged with implementing court-mandated programming when an offender is released. The challenge experienced by the offenders included a recommendation for the counseling not to be connected to the court so the offender can be more open with the counselor. However, the process must also implement strategies to keep the counseling sessions confidential, with very few exceptions. This will allow the offender to get the help needed without fear of punitive punishment after being open with the counselor. Lastly, the stakeholders who implement the transitional programs must expand the resources available for mental health care consumers when released from custody. Specifically, implementing mental health care follow-up for the offenders when they are released from custody will assist them in getting the help they need and prevent self-medication with other illicit drugs.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations of this study included a minimum of two offenses resulting in arrest, with one of the offenses occurring in Placer County, California, and having served time in the Placer County Jail. A minimum of two offenses was considered, as this study focused on improving repeat offenders' success when released from custody. Additionally, the offenders who participated in this study had to be out of custody during the interview. The participants for this study were contacted at the Placer Re-Entry Program (PREP) while they attended different classes associated with their offenses.

Limitations in the study included the method of recruiting participants for this study through the PREP as they were coming or going from classes associated with their offense. This

pool included candidates with various offenses but could be expanded to offenders outside of PREP. Additionally, many of the offenders contacted through PREP were reluctant to participate in the research, as many were coming from work to their class and were unwilling to stay after class was over to participate in the interview.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are still significant gaps in the research on the effectiveness of programming to reduce recidivism in California. Specifically, the participants in this study identified many ways they struggled or did not feel support in their transition from custody to society. However, there was not enough evidence to support that a change in programming would reduce the recidivism rate in California.

This research aimed to determine how programs could be improved from the lived experiences of the offender. However, there is still a research gap in assessing the effectiveness of the recommendations identified by the participants. There needs to be additional quantitative research utilizing participants who have participated in different programming efforts to determine the effectiveness of these changes within the correctional process to help offenders succeed when released.

Summary

This qualitative study explored how repeat offenders in Placer County described their lived experiences under Placer County Probation supervision. Additionally, how the participants described their lived experiences as repeat offenders, the support or lack of support they received from correctional intervention, and how they perceived the challenges when released into the community. The researcher used a transcendental phenomenological design to help understand how the participants described their experiences as repeat offenders in Placer County, California.

The theoretical framework for the research was the Hierarchy of Needs Theory. One research question and three guiding questions informed this study: What are the lived experiences of the repeat offenders under Placer County, California probation supervision? How do offenders describe their lived experiences as a repeat offender? How do offenders describe the support or lack of support from correction intervention? How do offenders perceive the challenges experienced after being released back to the community?

The current study found that offenders experienced several challenges when transitioning from custody to society. Some of these challenges started while they were still in the correctional setting but carried over to the transitional period when they were released back into the community. Specifically, some offenders mentioned they would like to start their court-ordered programming while still in custody rather than waiting until they were released. This would have allowed them to work or do other productive tasks when released rather than have to attend the court-ordered classes. These challenges supported the Hierarchy of Needs Theory, as offenders had to meet their basic needs when released. The study found that some offenders struggled with mental health disorders and benefitted greatly after receiving treatment through the transitional process.

Additionally, the need for non-court connected counseling and classes was mentioned as a way for the offenders to get the help they need, rather than fear they could get re-incarcerated if they mention their missteps to a court-ordered counselor. Many stakeholders can benefit from the findings in this study to evaluate the current processes within the criminal justice system to improve the chances of success when an offender is released from custody. These stakeholders include law enforcement administrators, transitional program administrators, judges in the court system, education administrators, and mental health care professionals.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 9, 2021

Andrew Beasley
David Ojo

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-138 Understanding Recidivism: A Phenomenological Study of Repeat Offenders' Lived Experiences Under Placer County, California, Probation Supervision

Dear Andrew Beasley, David Ojo,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B: Interview Questions

- 1. In your own words, describe your experience with reoffending in the community?**
- 2. Describe any challenges you experienced when you were released from custody back into the community?**
- 3. Describe the situation with as much detail as possible when you decided to reoffend?**
- 4. If you could turn back time, what would you do differently?**
- 5. How do you perceive yourself, and what would have helped you overcome the challenges you faced?**
- 6. Take a moment to reflect on your perception of reoffending in the community?**
- 7. Can you tell me more about what it is like to reoffend in the community?**
- 8. Describe your views about the factors that influenced your decision to reoffend?**

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed

Understanding Recidivism: A Phenomenological Study of Repeat Offenders' Lived Experiences Under Placer County, California, Probation Supervision

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Are you a repeat offender with at least 2 prior convictions?
 - Have you served time in Placer County Jail?
 - Are you currently out of custody?

If you answered **yes** to all of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in an inmate programming research study.

The purpose of this research study is to study the lived experiences of repeat offenders in Placer County, California. Participants will be asked to participate in an in-person or video teleconferencing interview to explore their lived experiences. After the researcher confirms the transcripts from the interview, the participants may be asked to conduct a follow-up interview, which will be conducted by telephone if necessary. Participants will receive a \$15 Amazon gift card and a certificate of appreciation.

The study is being conducted in the greater Roseville/Rocklin area.

If you would like to participate, contact the researcher at the phone number provided below.

A consent document will be provided to you by email immediately after completing the verbal screening.

Andy Beasley, a doctoral candidate in the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact Andy Beasley at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] for more information.

Liberty University IRB – 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515

Appendix D: Placer County PREP Center Permission Emails

Request to Conduct Interviews

Beasley, Andrew [REDACTED]

Fri 11/12/2021 11:05 AM

To: [REDACTED]

Bcc: Beasley, Andrew [REDACTED]

Good Morning Ms. Lucas,

I am currently in the final stages of completing a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice: Leadership from Liberty University. A portion of my dissertation research requires me to interview offenders out of custody. I would like to request permission from Placer County Probation to place fliers at the PREP Center in Roseville to solicit volunteers to be interviewed. Do you have a point of contact where I can send the request, or should I send the request to you to be forwarded to the appropriate person?

Very respectfully,

Andy Beasley
Ph.D. Candidate, Liberty University

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

RE: [External] RE: Request to Conduct Interviews

Dianne Lucas Probation [REDACTED]

Tue 11/16/2021 8:18 AM

To: Beasley, Andrew [REDACTED]

Hello Andy,

You may contact Christi Fee, Coordinator, at the PREP Center at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Have a great day!

Dianne Lucas

Executive Secretary
Placer County Probation Department

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

RE: [External] RE: RE: Request to Conduct Interviews

Christi Fee <[REDACTED]>

Fri 12/3/2021 2:07 PM

To: Beasley, Andrew [REDACTED]

Hi Andy,

This works for me, thanks.

We are located behind the Roseville probation office on 10810 Justice Center Drive.
When facing the probation department (lower left quadrant of the building), drive on the road to the left behind the building. There is parking in the back.

Christi Fee
[REDACTED]

From: Beasley, Andrew [REDACTED]

Sent: Friday, December 3, 2021 11:28 AM

To: Christi Fee [REDACTED]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: [External] RE: RE: Request to Conduct Interviews

Hi Ms. Fee,

No problem at all, I hope you are feeling better. I have a meeting on Monday [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] until about 2:30. Would it be ok to come by after that?

Best,

Andy Beasley

From: Christi Fee [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, December 2, 2021 9:21 AM

To: Beasley, Andrew [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: [External] RE: RE: Request to Conduct Interviews

Hi Andy, I was out sick unexpectedly. Can you come by next week?

Christi Fee
[REDACTED]

Appendix E: Informed Consent

Consent

Title of the Project: Understanding Recidivism: A Phenomenological Study of Repeat Offenders' Lived Experiences under Placer County, California Probation Supervision

Principal Investigator: Andrew Beasley, Ph.D. Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, be a repeat offender with at least two previous convictions, have served time in Placer County Jail, and be currently out of custody. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask any questions before deciding whether to participate in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand the lived experiences of repeat offenders in Placer County, California. This research will identify shortcomings in inmate programming and ways it can be improved to increase the offender's chance of success when released from custody.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. I will ask you to participate in an in-person interview or an interview via video teleconferencing about your lived experience from your upbringing to navigating the criminal justice system. The interview will be approximately 30 to 45 minutes and will take place at a public location of your choosing (i.e., library, coffee shop, or church). I will audio-record the interview, but your identification will not be disclosed in the final dissertation.
2. If a follow-up interview is needed, I will follow up with a phone call to ask the additional question(s). The phone call will also be audio-recorded, but you will be notified before the interview recording begins.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include information for criminal justice leaders to improve the delivery of inmate programming in correctional settings to reduce recidivism among repeat offenders and improve correctional success. Improving correctional success will lower the crime rate in society and ultimately reduce the amount of money society spends on housing repeat offenders in correctional institutions.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. Although this study will be confidential, if information is disclosed during the interview to indicate an immediate threat to public safety, the researcher will take appropriate steps up to and including notifying public safety officials to ensure the public's safety.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the documents.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms in the final report to identify the different participants. The interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a safe. The data will not be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and all physical records will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer until the dissertation is published and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. The recordings will be saved for three years, at which time they will be deleted.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Each participant will receive a certificate of appreciation and a \$15 Amazon gift card for completing the interview. Participants who withdraw from the study prior to completing the interview will receive the certificate of appreciation for their time but will not receive the gift card.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you may choose not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Andrew Beasley. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. David Ojo, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix F: Certificate of Appreciation

