A THREE ESSAY CASE STUDY OF A CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND LOCAL SHERIFF'S

DEPARTMENT

By
Caroline Lise-Josee Thouin

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Chair of Committee: Dr. Elsa Gonzalez
Co-Chair of Committee: Dr. Frank Fernandez
Committee Member: Dr. Andrea Burridge
Committee Member: Dr. McClain Sampson

University of Houston

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Dedication

To my daughter, Lina. May you have a boundless love for both learning and adventure.

Acknowledgment

Dustin: When I started this journey, neither of us could have imagined the obstacles we would face for me to get across the finish line. In the last three years, we've moved (three times), had our beautiful baby girl, experienced a world-wide pandemic, and said goodbye to our furry family member, Gunner. Through it all, you have been the glue that has held our family together and pushed me to succeed. This simply could not have been accomplished without your endless support. Thank you for acting like you knew what I was talking about when I read my drafts aloud, turning the tv down when I was writing (even during sports), and staying up late with me when I procrastinated yet another deadline. The sacrifices you have made for me and our family did not go unnoticed.

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Friends and family: Sprinkled within the pages of this dissertation are the names of friends and family. I hope you know that you have made a positive impact on my life. This is my small way of showing you that I love you and that I am thankful for you.

Abstract

Background: This three paper dissertation addresses the nationally relevant conversation relating to criminal justice reform as it pertains to educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals. The current study focuses on the partnership between a community college and a local sheriff's department that work together to offer correctional education opportunities to incarcerated individuals. **Purpose:** This dissertation explores the decision making processes of this partnership, the ways in which program structure impedes or improves program outcomes, and the experiences and perceptions of program effectiveness from community college teachers working in this partnership. **Methods:** In all three papers, I employ case study methods to answer the research question(s) posed. In the first paper, I interview four administrative personnel and analyze ten administrative documents. In the second paper, I interview four administrative personnel and complete a document analysis of various administrative documents. Then, I use thematic analysis to organize and present findings. For the third paper, I interview five teachers employed by the community college. Again, I employ thematic analysis to analyze the data. **Results:** In the first paper, I find that by writing and revising an MOU, correctional education partnerships can set clear roles. At the same time, I find that carceral and educational organizations have vastly different cultures. These differences create challenges in the decision making process. In the second paper, I find that structural factors such as aligning courses with college curriculum, having a knowledge of local labor market trends, creating program evaluation methods, and offering equitable course offerings for men and women are key for partnerships to provide quality correctional education. In the third paper, I find that correctional

education teachers must be adaptable to handle the challenges of teaching in this setting. Additionally, I find that without a method of tracking student outcomes post-release teachers are unable to measure the effectiveness of the program. **Conclusion:** Together, these papers offer a detailed image of the benefits, obstacles, and areas of improvement for this correctional education partnership. This work can inform administrators and policy makers to ensure high-quality instruction for incarcerated individuals.

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Chapter I - Introduction

Education is the key to unlocking social and economic equality. With some post-secondary education required for a growing number of available jobs, the need for a degree beyond high school is a necessity. In 2004, 36.6% of the state prison population had attained less than a high school education compared to 19% of the general U.S population age 16 and over (Crayton & Neusteter, 2008). Additionally, 51% of the general U.S. adult population had at least some postsecondary education compared to 14.4% of state prisoners (Crayton & Neusteter, 2008).

Due in part by low education levels, 7 out of 10 released persons will commit a new crime, and half will end up back in prison within three years of release (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011). By participating in any type of correctional education while incarcerated, individuals can reduce their chances of recidivism by 43% (Davis et al., 2013). Specifically, participating in an academic program (ABE, high school/GED, or post-secondary education) while incarcerated could reduce the chances of recidivism by 16%, 24% by participating in a vocational program (Mackenzie, 2006). Therefore, education, while incarcerated, may help individuals create equitable futures for themselves and their families. As low-skilled jobs largely disappear, education gives incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals a chance to gain employment (Couloute, 2018).

Previous research has confirmed that correctional education can reduce recidivism, help released individuals gain employment, cut costs for tax-payers, and create equitable futures for families affected by incarceration (Davis et al., Gorgol & Sponsler, 2008; Erisman & Contardo, 2005). Even though research continues to prove the

importance of education for the incarcerated population, there is still limited movement in terms of federal and state policies. In response to policies such as the Violent Crime Act and Workforce Investment Act in the 1990s, many of the existing correctional education programs were forced to close (Smith, 2018). Subsequently, there is a lack of research in this field, particularly on the partnerships between correctional and educational institutions that remain.

In this dissertation, I add to the limited scholarly conversation on corrections education by addressing three topics related to educational opportunities for people in jails: (a) How sheriff's departments and community colleges structure educational programs and how that structure affects decision-making, (b) How partnerships between sheriff's departments and community colleges are structured to provide educational opportunities that develop marketable skills, and (c) How community college teachers experience teaching in correctional settings and their perceptions of the programs overall effectiveness. In the remainder of this chapter, I help frame these three studies by offering a brief history of correctional education, discussing the impact of federal financial support for correctional education, reviewing the importance that community colleges hold in providing correctional education, and presenting a demographic overview of the current jail population.

The History of Correctional Education

In correctional institutions, "education is the process or the means of achieving the reformation, correction, or rehabilitation of inmates" (Pugmire, 1937, p. 15). Criminal philosophy writings of the 18th and 19th centuries supported the idea that the main cause of crime was ignorance and a lack of education. Formal education then, combined with

skilled labor, was fundamental to the maintenance of a legal, moral, and economic social competence (Roberts, 1997). Thus, from the inception of the prison system in the United States, "there have been efforts to use education to combat recidivism, create opportunity, and instill virtue among incarcerated citizens" (Correctional Education Association, nd.).

The first historical account of correctional education occurred at Walnut Street Jail. Built-in 1773, the Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia was the world's first penitentiary. William Rogers', a clergyman and minister, was known as the father of correctional education (Roberts, 1997). He believed and created programs based on the idea that education in prison could introduce incarcerated persons to moral virtue. Along with daily readings of the Bible, instruction centered on vocational training so that when inmates returned to the public, they could contribute to society through labor (Musick & Gunsaulus-Musick, 2017). This work program that included shoemaking, weaving, cutting, and other useful trades was similar to the modern vocational course (Musick & Gunsaulus-Musick, 2017).

Correctional education was on the rise by the late 1800s to mid-1900s. In a survey of penal institutions, it was found that facilities devoted up to 85% of their day to various education activities (Reagen & Stoughton, 1976). In 1932, the Wisconsin State Prison began a full-time program under the guidance of the State University System. Wisconsin provided exams, certified teachers, and awarded certificates for vocational and academic achievement at both the high school and post-secondary level (Roberts, 1997).

A few decades after the Wisconsin program was started, Texas introduced the Texas Windham School District in 1969. It aimed to close educational gaps by teaching life skills, literacy, and providing access to post-secondary education (Musick &

Gunsaulus-Musick, 2017). The idea was that improving prisoners' cognition would make them reevaluate their thinking and give them the resources to cope with life's obstacles. Postsecondary courses were rigorous, and if students opted-in they would receive degrees for their work (Musick & Gunsaulus-Musick, 2017). With these degrees, they were able to join the workforce or continue their education elsewhere. The success of Windham inspired future efforts for higher education in correctional institutions.

Accomplishments of these programs were not always enough to inspire widespread support for correctional education. Many of the college affiliated programs developed in the 20th century practiced a low profile and avoided public exposure of the programs they offered in conjunction with penal institutions. The impression was that "teaching prisoners basic literacy is publicly acceptable, but giving them a college opportunity is granting a luxury to people who should be given the bare minimum" (Flood, 1979). And so, from reciting and writing the bible to credit-bearing post-secondary courses, correctional education was at the forefront of activist, political, and conservatist conversations (Flood, 1979). Specifically, the discrepancy on whether education for the incarcerated should be paid for with federal dollars has been a topic of contention between policymakers for decades.

Fluctuating Federal and Financial Support

In 1965, President Johnson's administration passed the Higher Education Act, expanding postsecondary education throughout the United States. The financial aid provided through this act was extended to individuals in prison. Subsequently, by 1982, 350 college-in-prison programs enrolled almost 27,000 prisoners (9 percent of the nation's prison population), primarily through Pell Grants (Sawyer, 2019). By 1990, there

were 772 prison college programs in more than 1,000 facilities (Robinson & English, 2017). This began to change in 1992, with an amendment to the Higher Education Act that prohibited incarcerated people serving a life sentence and those on death row from accessing Pell Grants.

In 1994, Congress passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. With this, all individuals in state and federal prison were barred from accessing federal financial aid. This policy drastically altered the landscape of available correctional education programs. At the time, and still today, the federal Pell Grant program authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, is the single largest source of federal grant aid supporting postsecondary education students (Mahan, 2012). Without access to Pell Grants for students, states and colleges were left to figure out the best way to pay for correctional education programs. Many correctional education programs collapsed in the law's wake (Smith, 2018).

With the loss of federal funding, the number of postsecondary programs dropped to fewer than 10 across the entire nation. In fact, since the Crime Bill of 1994, many universities and colleges have withdrawn or reduced their involvement with prison education programs; 66% of the reporting correctional systems indicated that the withdrawal of Pell Grants eliminated most if not all of their college course opportunities for inmates (Welsh, 2002). The only remaining programs were those that received financial and volunteer support from other sources (Sawyer, 2019). Additionally, in 1998, the Workforce Investment Act reduced the allotted state funds and grants that could be used towards correctional education. Now, states could place a *maximum* of 10% of their funds to these programs (Spangenberg, 2004). This nullified the Adult Education Act that

required a *minimum* of 10% of state funds and grants to be used for correctional education (Spangenberg, 2004).

In recent years, politicians and policymakers alike have tried to solve the United States' problematic mass incarceration by increasing federal funding and policy support. In 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) replaced the WIA. The WIOA increased the percentage of funds that states can allot to correctional education from 10% to 20% (Linton, 2015). A year later, the Obama administration announced the Second Chance Pell Experiment. This program provided need-based Pell Grants to people in state and federal prisons. It included 65 colleges in 27 states. The participating colleges offered a combined 82 certificate programs, 69 AA/AS/AAS degree programs, and 24 BA/BS degree programs. In three years, over 4,000 credentials were awarded by these colleges (Boldin, 2018).

In April 2020, U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy Devos expanded the Second Chance Pell program. The expansion doubled the experiment, allowing Pell Grants at 130 schools in 42 states (Department of Education, 2020). Two-thirds of the newly added participating schools are two-year institutions, one-third of participating schools are minority-serving institutions, and all fall under the category of private non-profit or public institutions (DOE, 2020). Then, in December 2020, Congress voted to lift the long-standing ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals (Green, 2020). As correctional education programs emerge and expand in the years to come, this dissertation is especially timely and nationally relevant to ensure high-quality education for incarcerated individuals.

The Role of Two-Year Colleges in Correctional Education

In a meta-analysis of correctional education programs, Erisman & Contardo (2005) concluded that 68% of all post-secondary correctional education was provided by community colleges. As seen through the 2020 expansion of the Second Chance Act, community colleges continue to play a leading role in offering correctional education. By partnering with a community college, correctional institutions take part in a mutually beneficial relationship. In the case of community colleges, they can reach more students than before. Since community colleges are open-access, they can enroll any student above the age of 18, including those who are incarcerated. Moreover, community colleges are located in numerous parts of the state and are often located close to state prisons and jails.

Additionally, community colleges are accustomed to many of the challenges faced by the incarcerated population, such as lack of college-readiness, and food, housing, and financial insecurity (Corrections to College California, 2018). For the correctional institution, they can provide programming that can reduce recidivism (Corrections to College California, 2018). College and correctional institution partnerships offer a variety of correctional programs, including developmental or remedial courses, career and technical education, and traditional full-credit college degree courses. Across all states, adult education and literacy instruction are the most common education programs offered to incarcerated students (Mukamal, et al., 2015). Additionally, the majority of courses are offered on-site, compared to using a distance education platform; states have been hesitant to use distance education in these settings for security reasons (Mukamal, et al., 2015).

Community colleges that partner with jails (under sheriff's departments), tend to offer fewer programs than partnerships with state prisons. The vast majority of correctional programs in jails are often limited to non-credit courses such as GED, ESL, and career-technical courses (Mukamal, et al., 2015). Offering courses in jails comes with a range of difficulties such as length of stay, student college-readiness, lack of space, and funding. First, the time an individual spends in jail can vary tremendously and be as short as a month. Therefore, program choices must account for shorter stays than state prison sentences, with the majority of jail-based courses ranging between 1-15 weeks (Corrections to College California, 2018). Secondly, like many students who enroll in community colleges, these students may not be ready to take college-level coursework. It is up to the teachers and program administrators to accommodate a range of learning abilities. Third, jails often do not have space built in for educational programming. Due to a lack of space, programs may need to adjust the format of courses and the times that courses are offered (Mukamal, et al., 2015). Lastly, jail education programs are funded through state appropriations and additional grants (Mukamal, et al., 2015). Depending on the state, funding and grant opportunities may not be enough to offer all of the desired course offerings, pay for student tuition, build additional space for classrooms, or buy necessary teaching materials and technology.

The Jail Population

There are approximately 746,000 individuals in jail on any given day (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). However, people go to jail 10.6 million times a year. Of those that have been convicted, the majority of them are serving misdemeanor sentences of under a year. On average, an individual will spend 28 days in jail (Zeng, 2018). The largest number of

individuals in jail are convicted of public order crimes. These may include prostitution, alcohol crimes, or driving under the influence (DUI). Approximately 470,000 people in jail have not been convicted of crimes (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). This is because, if someone cannot post bail they will be detained in the local jail. Consequently, people in jail are disproportionately poor compared to the overall U.S. population. In the United States, poverty is not only a predictor of incarceration, but it is also often the outcome. High bail amounts, cost of lawyers, and probation fees negatively target and affect low-income individuals.

In terms of race, people of color are overrepresented in the nation's jails. Though Black Americans represent 13% of the U.S. population, they account for 40% of the incarcerated population (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2018), Black Americans were jailed at a rate of 592 per 100,000 Black U.S residents, while White Americans were jailed at a rate of 187 per 100,000 White U.S residents. Additionally, once detained, Black residents are more likely to be convicted and more likely to experience lengthy sentences than White residents (Sentencing Project, 2015). Additionally, even though Black and White residents report using drugs at similar rates, Black residents are six times more likely to get a drug charge (NAACP, 2015). A Black man in his thirties has a 1 in 12 chance of being in jail or prison on any given day.

The disproportionate representation of Black Americans in jails is the perpetration of years of policies that disenfranchise poor people and people of color. With more than 2/3 of individuals in jails held for felony charges, there are a large number of people who will be forever marginalized by the criminal justice system abuse (Sentencing Project,

2015). A total of 6.1 million Americans were unable to vote in 2016. These felony

charges affect the political voice of historically relegated communities (NAACP, 2015).

In the end, the U.S. creates and preserves policies that allow racial disparities to exist in

the criminal justice system, and assures that law enforcement will generally prevail over

the rights of minorities and the poor (NAACP, 2015).

Between 2008 and 2018, the rate of incarceration for women grew by 10% (Zeng,

2018). While the male jail population decreased by 62,500, the female population grew

by 15,400 (Zeng, 2018). Incarcerated women are likely to have substance abuse

problems, high rates of HIV, and histories of physical and sexual abuse (Sentencing

Project, 2015). Black women are two times more likely than White women to be

incarcerated (NAACP, 2015). Sadly, few post-release programs are offered to

incarcerated women and girls (Kajstura, 2019).

Contributions of the Current Study to the Literature

To this point, I have presented an overview of previous research and policies that

informs this dissertation topic. This introduction has also presented key findings in the

field of correctional education. Moreover, this introduction has framed the role that

community colleges play in offering correctional education opportunities. Lastly, this

introduction discussed the current demographic makeup of jails.

Considering the state of the literature, this dissertation will contribute to the

limited knowledge base on correctional education partnerships. Specifically, research has

yet to provide evidence for three key pieces of information about correctional education.

First, we do not know the details of what partnerships between community colleges and

sheriff's departments look like. Secondly, we have very little knowledge of how

correctional education programs are structured to build skills and increase employability for students. Thirdly, we do not have a deep understanding of the experiences of teachers working in correctional settings.

This dissertation will focus on providing insight into these three gaps in the literature through a set of standalone papers that will be presented as chapters 2, 3, and 4 of the dissertation, respectively. Each chapter will build on the other to create a comprehensive illustration of correctional education program partnerships between community colleges and jails. I will do this by focusing on a single case of a correctional education program that is a partnership between a community college and county jail (ran by the local sheriff's department). Each of these chapters will use the qualitative case study research methods laid out by Stake (2008) and Yin (2017). Additionally, by analyzing both interviews and document data each study applies triangulation to strengthen the validity of findings (Yin, 1984). Notably, the conceptual frameworks chosen for each study are based on the research question answered, and will, therefore, vary from paper to paper.

Organization of the Dissertation

Though there has been an increase of political interest in reforming the criminal justice system, there is an overall lack of research on correctional education, specifically for community college and sheriff department partnership programs. Currently, we know little about the processes within correctional education partnerships, how correctional education programs prepare students to gain employment post-release, and how faculty members experience teaching in correctional settings. Serving as a starting point for a

larger research agenda, this dissertation is designed to provide a better understanding of correctional education partnerships.

I began this dissertation by reviewing the importance that correctional education plays in the overall criminal justice system. Then, I provided a brief history of the creation and growth of correctional education programs. I offered an overview of past and current federal funding, placing an emphasis on how these policies have shaped the current state of correctional education. Additionally, I highlighted the key role that community colleges have previously and continue to hold in offering education to incarcerated individuals. At this time, I emphasized the benefits of partnerships between community colleges and jails. Then, I drew attention to the racial disparities in the criminal justice system, paying special attention to the jail population. In the end, I tie in this dissertation to the overall conversation on correctional education and explain the gaps that will be addressed by each separate paper.

This three-article dissertation will address different aspects of a correctional education partnership and the program it oversees. In each paper, the program analyzed is a long-standing partnership between a community college and sheriff's department that oversees the county jail. Additionally, for each paper, I analyze interviews and document data from a variety of individuals working for this correctional education program. Lastly, in Chapter Five, I review the initial purpose and scope of this dissertation, summarize the findings of each of the three papers, and draw links between each of them. I discuss the limitations of the overall findings as well as the implications of this research for correctional education programs, community college leaders and administrators, and policymakers. I conclude by offering suggestions for future research in this area.

Chapter Two

In the first empirical paper (Chapter Two), I focus on how the structure of adult vocational education programs create educational opportunities for incarcerated students. Using the case study approach, this study seeks to better understand how the implementation of the program is shaped by the relationship between the two collaborating institutions. I discuss the intricacies of the decision-making process and the cultural differences between these organizations, offering insight and suggestions for program leaders and policymakers alike. I ask:

(1) How do a community college and the local sheriff's department partner to make decisions and implement a correctional education program?

(a) What factors facilitate or impede the success of the partnership?

The first paper provides an important foundation for the subsequent papers by offering insight into how correctional education partnerships work, what unique challenges this setting offers for program administrators, and how organizations work to solve problems even though they are culturally different. At the same time, it leaves room for further research on how these types of organizations choose the curriculum taught and how they evaluate their progress. Additionally, this paper highlights the need for future research to incorporate the experience of teachers working in the field of correctional education. Thus, the remainder of this dissertation expands on the initial findings of the first paper.

Chapter Three

In the second empirical paper (Chapter Three), I aim to better understand how a partnerships between a community-college and sheriff's department is structured to

provide educational opportunities that develop marketable skills for the workforce. This case study focuses on how program leaders choose the course curriculum, course length, and make necessary program changes to ensure that students are equipped for employment once released. Though research shows that community colleges are accustomed to teaching students with a variety of academic and ability levels (Corrections to College California, 2018), I find that correctional settings offer a range of unique obstacles for administrators to work around. In the end, I present suggestions on how programs can better equip all students for the job market, within the limitations of the jail setting. I ask:

(1) *How is a partnership between a community college and sheriff's department structured to provide educational opportunities that develop marketable skills for the workforce?*

(2) *Which structures within this partnership benefit or impede the development of students' marketable skills?*

The second empirical paper builds upon the findings of the first paper. It provides insight into how these partnerships are structured to offer courses that will build workforce skills. The findings of this paper suggest that partnerships should embed the program mission within the structure of the program. This can be done by aligning courses with college curriculum and employing strategies to ensure students can gain employment post-release. Findings also highlight the need for this partnership to increase access to technology, offer equitable course offerings for both men and women, and create a system for tracking student outcomes post-release. However, like the first paper, this second paper prioritizes the voice of program administrators. Therefore, the third and

final paper is necessary to better understand the experiences and perceptions held by program faculty.

Chapter Four

In paper three (Chapter four), I bring attention to the rising need to better understand the experiences of instructors in correctional education settings. We know that community colleges are more likely to offer correctional education programs than any other institutional type (Erisman & Contardo, 2005). However, only a small number of research studies have discussed the difficulties of teaching in this setting, including the lack of financial resources, and institutional policies that create pedagogical problems for teachers (McCarthy, 2006), and almost no studies have looked at these experiences for community college instructors working in jails. Using interview data, this case study taps into the experiences of community college instructors working in the partnership with the sheriff's department. In this final paper, I ask the following research questions:

(1) How do instructors describe their experience in correctional settings?

(2) How do instructors perceive effective education in correctional settings?

In this paper, I find that instructors working in correctional settings must be adaptable to handle daily challenges. These include having limited resources for instructing students, constant disruptions to their class time, and lack of support from correctional staff. I also find that instructors in this program believe the education they offer students is equivalent to the traditional setting, but they do not currently have a way to measure the effectiveness of their program. The third paper confirms some of the findings of the first and second papers and offers an additional perspective on the daily procedures of correctional education partnerships.

Positionality Statement

Research represents a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants (England, 1994). Thus, in each of these three qualitative research papers (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) it was important for me to acknowledge the preconceived notions that I may have toward correctional education that would inevitably affect the research methods and analysis. Bourke (2014) posits that "we have to acknowledge who we are as individuals, and as members of groups, and as resting in and moving within social positions." As a White, cisgender woman, living most of my life in the Southern United States, I must be self-conscious of the privilege that I have in conducting this research.

As a former teacher and social studies department chair at a public charter school, the vast majority of students I taught were students of color and socio-economically disadvantaged. In this role, I saw the detrimental impact that mass incarceration has on these populations. It was these students' voices and stories that motivated me to research educational opportunities for those currently incarcerated. Therefore, it is my goal for this work to reflect and uplift the voices of the incarcerated population, and those that dedicate their livelihoods to improving their educational opportunities.

Implications for Supporting Correctional Education

The overall goal of this dissertation is to offer a better understanding of correctional education programs. In each paper, I address different research questions, which in turn offers robust findings for the field of correctional education. In the first empirical paper (Chapter Two), I discuss the intricacies of the decision-making process, such as the use of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to delineate roles and responsibilities between community college and law enforcement partners. Accordingly,

the findings for this paper provide an inside look into how decisions are made, who makes certain decisions, and how the partnership works together for a common goal. This paper also discusses the cultural differences between the two partnering organizations. While these organizations partner to offer educational opportunities to incarcerated individuals, they have distinct cultural beliefs about the population at hand. These beliefs influence their acceptance to educate incarcerated students, the treatment of students, and the terminology used to describe students. In an era when community colleges are being encouraged to develop new partnerships or expand traditional relationships with law enforcement, the findings of this study can help inform how community college leaders negotiate the challenge of working with sheriff's department officers and jail administrators to provide education to students.

In the second empirical paper (Chapter Three), I provide insight into how correctional education programs are structured to build students' workforce skills. For example, I consider how classes are chosen, who creates the class curriculum, when and why some classes are added or dropped from the class offerings, how the program considers the labor market and the support the program gives for students to continue their education and gain employment post-release. Additionally, I present differences in course offerings for male versus female inmates, offering implications for current and future correctional education programs. The findings of this paper support the need to create programs that are aligned to the job market, to offer clear pathways for students to earn college credit once released, and to create a system for evaluating program effectiveness in terms of building skills, increasing employability, and reducing recidivism.

In the third empirical paper (Chapter Four), I explore the experiences of instructors in correctional settings and their perceptions of program effectiveness. I aim to better understand the challenges and motivations of working in this setting, and how they perceive effectiveness in correctional education. I present findings that instructors in this program adapt overtime to the unique constraints of correctional settings. Instructors are asked to teach courses at the same level of traditional college settings, but with far less resources available to them. Lastly, instructors are far less concerned with recidivism, as they are with making a difference in the lives of their students. The findings of this paper support the need for additional training for instructors starting a career in correctional education, and add to the need to create a measure of program effectiveness so that instructors can improve student outcomes.

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Chapter II – Research Paper One

Understanding the Implications of Partnerships in Vocational Correctional

Education Programs: A Case Study of the Relationship between a Community

College and County Sheriff's Department

In response to a changing policy environment, community colleges have grown to be a likely source for partnerships between correctional and educational institutions (Office of Vocational and Adult Ed, 2009). Community colleges play a leading role in correctional education because of their mission statements that endorse educational opportunities for all and offer lower course fees than traditional universities (Office of Vocational and Adult Ed, 2009). In response, a few states have increased opportunities for colleges and correctional institutions to create beneficial partnerships.

In 2014, the California Governor passed Senate Bill 1391 that expanded access to face-to-face community college courses inside correctional institutions that led to degrees or certificates. The California community college system and other alike programs in states such as Texas, Indiana, Virginia, Ohio, North Carolina, and Washington suggest that a key factor to success is for programs to establish a strong working partnership between the college and correctional facility. Anecdotally, programs that created partnerships have benefited most by being able to work together in addressing daily challenges and barriers that emerged (Arambula et al., 2018; Office of Vocational and Adult Ed, 2009). Moreover, they're able to reduce recidivism, change lives, and build stronger communities (Corrections to College California, 2018). In all, the increasing number of community colleges creating opportunities for the incarcerated population illustrates the need to understand partnerships between colleges and correctional

institutions, and how they can influence the implementation of correctional education programs.

Building off what we already know, this study is unique because it uses the lens of a community of practice to analyze a partnership between a community college and county sheriff's department, and how they collaboratively operate an educational program for incarcerated students. Specifically, this case study focused on a partnership between a community college and a sheriff's department overseeing a jail in a large city, in a southern state, to analyze how the implementation of the program is impacted by the relationship between the two collaborating institutions. To determine this, I focused on the following research questions: *How do a community college and the local sheriff's department partner to make decisions and implement a correctional education program?*

(a) What factors facilitate or impede the success of the partnership?

Using Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) framework to examine the partnership between the community college and sheriff's department, the working hypothesis is that the community college and local sheriff's department currently resemble an underdeveloped CoP. In this case, recommendations can be made on how to improve the CoP for the program's benefit. Therefore, the CoP framework will be used to analyze interview data to better understand the relationship between the community college and sheriff's department, and how decisions are made concerning the structure of the correctional education program. In all, I draw on the framework to offer transferrable implications for policymakers and community college practitioners who are implementing educational partnerships with local law enforcement agencies.

Policy Context

In 2018, the U.S. admitted 10.7 million individuals into jail (Zeng, 2020). Unlike prisons which are under the jurisdiction of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, jail confinement facilities are overseen by a local law enforcement agency and are intended for adults, but sometimes holds juveniles for confinement before or after adjudication. Jails typically house individuals who have sentences under a year, are awaiting trial or conviction, are awaiting transfer to another designated facility, individuals who violated the terms of their bond or parole, and those that cannot afford to post bail. Therefore, the rate of incarceration in jails is much higher, even though the average individual only stays approximately 25 days (Zeng, 2020).

To create a more effective correctional system that reduces recidivism, a slow shift in national policy has taken place in recent years. In 2005, the Obama administration enacted the Second Chance Pell Grant Program which makes incarcerated individuals, that meet particular criteria, eligible for federal student aid in 67 facilities across the U.S. This is the first program to offer funding for incarcerated individuals since the 1994 amendment to the Higher Education Act that eliminated Pell Grant eligibility to those in federal and state penal institutions. In April of 2020, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos announced an expansion of this program, stating that the experiment gave students the opportunity for future success in the workplace. An additional 67 institutions were invited to participate, allowing incarcerated individuals at these participating institutions the opportunity to receive need-based Pell Grant funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Furthermore, in reaction to the low reading, mathematical, and English language skills of the U.S. adult population, the Department of Education released its blueprint to

reauthorize the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act in 2003. The reauthorization and improvement of Title II-Adult Education and Literacy of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, has the overall goal to increase educational opportunities offered to adults. These government changes, which went into effect in March 2019, highlight the increasing interest in advancing the educational and employment opportunities of incarcerated students (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

In 2019, The First Step Act supported by advocacy group #Cut50, was a bipartisan effort aimed at reforming the criminal justice system, including reducing recidivism (Broden & Mikelson, 2018). The initiative grew out of California, but it draws its inspiration from the success that Texas had more than one decade ago. In 2007, the Governor of Texas began the initiative as a cost-saving tool due to a high state prison population of 170,000 people. Overall, the state sought to reduce the number of beds needed by creating drug courts, offering rehabilitation and education opportunities, and reducing incarceration rates for nonviolent offenders. Since 2007, the state has closed eight prisons, dropped the prison population by 30,000 individuals, and achieved the lowest crime rate since 1967 (Wiley, 2018). Now, Texas' reforms have been recognized by President Trump for their ability to reduce the incarcerated population and therefore spending.

The First Step Act was presented by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Sen. John Cornyn (R -TX). The focus of this bill is to ensure that incarcerated people are given opportunities to take courses and be prepared for jobs when released. To reduce recidivism, this bill seeks to improve and grow opportunities for vocational training, academic classes, and substance abuse treatment. The bill was approved by the House of

Representatives in May 2018 and was signed into law in January of 2019, further

affirming national and state calls for criminal justice reform. With the recent attention

placed on reducing the incarceration rate, community college leaders should consider the

role that their partnerships with local law enforcement play in offering educational

opportunities to incarcerated students.

<div align="center">**Review of the Literature**</div>

Recidivism & Program Type

The majority of literature on correctional education focuses on the impact that it

has on reducing the recidivism rate of the incarcerated population, with different levels of

success. Specifically, there have been four major meta-analyses that concluded with

varying effect sizes, that academic achievement and recidivism are indeed linked. In

2000, Wilson et al. conducted a meta-analysis on corrections education, vocational, and

work programs. In the 33 independent experiments they used, they found effect sizes in

the range of 18% to 34%. However, they noted a lack of methodologically strong

research in the previous research they surveyed while conducting their analysis. Chappell

(2004), completed a 10-year meta-analysis with studies from the years 1990-1999. In the

end, she chose 15 studies to conduct her analysis that included vocational, academic,

undergraduate, graduate, certificate, and degree programs. She found a positive

correlation between participation in postsecondary correctional education (PSCE) and

reduction in recidivism. She recorded a significant effect size of .31. In her study, she

notes the work of Wells (2000). In his meta-analysis, Wells looked at 124 studies

completed between 1987 and 2000. His effect size was slightly larger at .54 and confirms

the positive correlation between a reduction in recidivism and participation in

correctional education. There was no substantial variation in effect sizes between program types.

The most recent and comprehensive meta-analysis comes from the Rand Corporation. Rand analyzed 58 unique studies spanning from 1980-2011. They concluded that the treatment group (those who participated in PSCE) had a 43% lower chance odds of recidivism compared to the comparison group (those who did not participate in PSCE). In the end, correctional education regardless of the type of program students participated in, would reduce recidivism for incarcerated individuals by 12.9% (Davis et al., 2013). In terms of which type of program is most effective, Gaes (2008), explained that while well-designed studies concluded that correctional education reduces recidivism and enhances post-release employment, "there are not enough high-quality studies to indicate which type of correctional education program provides the highest return for released individuals" (p.28).

A meta-analysis conducted by Reed (2015), attempted to fill this gap by analyzing the outcomes of five prominent studies of corrections-based education. Reed summarized correctional education as spanning ABE, GED, CTE, and Post-Secondary Education (PSE) courses. Though GED programs are most commonly found in correctional settings, she concluded that the most significant effect size from the research studies evaluated was from a woman's plumbing career and technical education (CTE) course; which saw a $g = 2.04$ effect on a written test of plumbing knowledge (Young & Mattucci, 2006). These findings highlight the need for additional research on educational opportunities to adults in correctional settings.

In summary, previous and current studies show a correlation between taking some sort of correctional education courses and a lower chance of recidivism. Further research is still needed to examine which type of program is more effective, the length of time needed to achieve lowered recidivism, and the impact that lower recidivism has on society and the labor market as a whole. Still, scholars have largely overlooked the ways that law enforcement agencies and outside groups work together to implement correctional education programs and educational offerings.

Current Partnerships

As stated by Davis (2019), "in the United States, community colleges provide the majority of postsecondary education (PSE) programs in correctional institutions (68%), followed by public four-year institutions (16%) and private, nonprofit, four-year institutions (10%)" (p. 12). Community colleges are a popular choice for correctional education partnerships for several reasons. Firstly, they are typically located throughout the state. Sites can even be found in geographically isolated areas, where most correctional institutions are located (Erisman & Contardo, 2005). Secondly, community colleges have extensive experience in providing placement testing and remedial coursework for academically underprepared students. This is important because incarcerated individuals are less educated and have fewer measurable job skills than the general population (Andrews & Bonta, 2003). Additionally, providing correctional education to the incarcerated population allows community colleges to increase their student enrollment and revenue while fulfilling their mission to make education available to all residents. Lastly, correctional institutions report collaborating with community colleges for education services because of their low-cost status as an accredited post-

secondary institution, and willingness to partner (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). With the growth of correctional education in California, Corrections to College California was founded to build a network of bridges from correctional institutions to college. One of their projects, "College in Jail Toolkit", was designed to assist California community college and sheriff's departments build partnerships within county jails. In an equally informative document, researchers at the Vera Institute address issues of social justice by conducting research and piloting solutions. Each of these organizations have compiled exemplary recommendations for future partnerships between educational and correctional institutions.

In a 2016 publication by the Vera Institute, researchers noted the most critical aspect of a successful correctional education program was building an effective partnership between the college and correctional institution. To do so, the two participating organizations should set alike goals. Differing goals could lead to disagreements about the type of program to offer, how to measure outcomes, and which individuals to prioritize for courses (Delaney et al., 2016). Thus, shared goal setting is listed as a critical component to program partnerships. Corrections to College California (2018) notes that one of the best ways for organizations to do this is through a shared memorandum of understanding (MOU). An MOU lays out the roles and responsibilities for each party and provides a framework for day-to-day operations. "The MOU should detail larger issues such as the timeline for scheduling courses and credential pathways, as well as smaller details such as which party is responsible for supplying papers and pencils for student use" (Corrections to College California, 2018, p. 4). Additionally, the MOU should be updated to reflect the current realities of the program. Therefore,

program administrators should be ready to modify the MOU on a yearly or bi-yearly basis.

Corrections to College California (2018) also remind program partners to be ready and willing to compromise. While the colleges' job is to educate, the jails' job is to provide safety and security. It is important to remember the role that each organization plays in the partnership. Delaney et al. (2016) suggested creating by-in from law enforcement staff. These individuals play a significant role in the day-to-day operations of a college program in a correctional facility, and their support is crucial. "It is the corrections officers who escort instructors and students to and from classes, make determinations about materials and resources that can or cannot be brought into a facility, and may be assigned to cover classrooms" (Delaney et al., 2016, p.14). Without buy-in from correctional staff, programs risk pushback from them. One way to build buy-in is through monthly meetings.

These meetings provide time and space for partners to address concerns, questions, suggestions, and funding. They also help to keep leadership informed. As the program develops and grows, staff should keep both college and Sheriff's Department leadership informed of its progress. (Corrections to College California, 2018, p. 5)

These publications help to inform community college and correctional institutions on the best practices for ensuring an effective partnership. However, there is still a limited amount of research on the decision making processes of such partnerships and how they influence the overall program structure. Therefore, this study will help to better

understand the realities of partnerships between community colleges and sheriff's departments, with a focus on vocational education courses.

Conceptual Framework

Creating and maintaining an effective partnership between two organizations requires significant collaboration and communication. The Community of Practice (CoP) framework is a social-organizational structure that "offers an approach for engaging partners in collaboratively solving complex problems and promoting best practices" (Padilla & Kreider, 2020, p. 309). Members of a CoP play an active role in negotiating goals and expectations, setting norms, and sharing knowledge. Though a CoP may form in several ways, an effective partnership requires the three fundamental elements of this framework: A mutual engagement, the involvement in a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Table 1 describes each component and how partnerships can exemplify these traits.

Table 1

Components of a Community of Practice

Component	Description
Mutual Engagement	How and what people do together as part of the practice. The amount and pattern of interaction among members. Interactions shape the group's culture and its practices.
Joint Enterprise	A set of problems and topics the group cares about. The common purpose that binds people together and provides a unifying goal and coherence for their actions.
Shared Repertoire	The concepts and artifacts the group creates. Continual development and maintenance of shared procedures, techniques, shortcuts, jargon, tools, concepts, actions, etc.

Note. This table is adapted from Burgatti (2000) & Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder (2000).

Wenger (1998) posits that a CoP is a system of relationships between people and activities developed with time. Kimble and Hidreth (2008) expanded on this idea and concluded that a CoP is connected by interdependent knowledge and the commitment to sharing relevant knowledge between each other. Pyrko et al. (2017) further defined a CoP as a process of knowing and knowledge sharing. Additionally, though a CoP is often found within "a business unit, it can be applied to organizational design, government, education, professional associations, development projects, and civic life" (Juriado & Gustafsson, 2007. p. 53).

The CoP framework was used to better understand the partnership between the college and sheriff's department in operating a correctional education program. Specifically, the framework was used to evaluate how this partnership is mutually engaged, creates a joint enterprise, and uses a shared repertoire. This will help to determine the steps the partnering organizations can take to become an effective correctional education partnership, as laid out by Corrections to College California (2018) and Delaney et al. (2016). Therefore, it is with this lens of a CoP that I will discuss the findings of the interviews and document analysis. In the end, this study aimed to better understand how partnerships can optimally function by using the CoP framework and to inform future research on community college and correctional education partnerships.

Research Methods

I conducted a single-case study to understand how the relationship between a community college and sheriff's department influences the implementation of a

vocational adult education program in a correctional setting. The data collection and analysis of this study draw on the approach of an intrinsic case study (Stake, 2008; Yin, 2009). An intrinsic case study is used when the researcher is seeking to better understand one particular case of interest as opposed to a particular problem (Stake, 2008). This case study consisted of interviews and document analysis conducted by the sole researcher to form a rich understanding of a community college and sheriff's department partnership, and how the partnership affects the decision making and implementation of the program. Since the overall purpose of this study was to better understand the particular case between one community college and sheriff's department partnership, the qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth look into the relationship and allowed me to address my research question.

Site and Participant Selection

The particular correctional education case studied was a cooperative effort between a community college and a local sheriff's department that oversees a county jail. This corrections education program was established in 1973 and provides non-college credit bearing, continuing education courses to individuals in the custody of the county sheriff's department. In 2004, the program became the first jail program in the nation to be certified by the Correctional Education Association (CEA). This accreditation is key, as CEA ensures that "correctional education programs have comprehensive policies and procedures, have qualified and well-trained personnel, have adequate resources, offer appropriate programming, and focus efforts on student needs and the best interest of society" (Correctional Education Association Standards Commission, 2004).

The vocational courses are offered at three sites in which incarcerated students are bused or escorted to each day. Courses are offered to those in the custody of the local jail, which has an average population of over 8,000 individuals on any given day. Enrollment occurs every two weeks and course length fluctuates between four to eight weeks, depending on the subject. The screening and recruiting process of students are handled by the jail authority, referred to as education deputies. Importantly, the jail does not prohibit someone from taking the course based on previous educational attainment levels or their English language proficiency. Additionally, the program is mindful of the courses offered so that they apply to someone with a criminal record wanting to obtain employment post-release. At the end of each course, students are awarded a certificate of completion, which they can take to employers or the community college to be applied as continuing education units (CEU), once they are released. Thus, these are certificates of completion, rather than proof of certification in a specific trade or field. Lastly, the program employs on average 20 full-time faculty, offers a wide array of vocational courses (See Table 2), and served over 6,000 students in 2018 (Students counted for each class enrolled in).

Table 2

2018 Description of Courses Offered

Short Course Description	# of Classes	Total Enrolled
Arts	95	491
English	216	1,728
Tailoring	60	458
Business Technology	221	1,405
Computer Science	69	404

Cook-Chef	63	132
Welding	118	277
Building Maintenance	36	51
Auto Body	71	235
Auto Mechanic	51	138
Materials	71	511
Wood Work	86	403
Total	1,157	6,233

In this partnership, the sheriff's department oversees operations at a local jail located in a large metropolitan city. According to recent census data, the city has an approximate population of over 2.3 million. On any given day, the jail will hold between 8,000 and 10,000 individuals; the majority (approximately 6,000) awaiting pre-trial. Since so many individuals are awaiting pre-trial or are held because they cannot afford to post bail, the average stay of individuals in this jail is 214 days. In terms of gender and age, the jail is predominately male (98%) and of working age (26-35 years old). Table 3 illustrates the racial and ethnic breakdown of the city versus the jail. Importantly, this data highlights that the jail is disproportionately occupied by Black residents.

Table 3

Demographic Makeup of City versus Jail population (Approximate Numbers)

Race/Ethnicity	City	Jail
White	57%	32%
Black	22%	49%
Hispanic or Latino	44%	17%

Asian	6.9%	See Other*
Other	2.4%	2%

The selection criteria for participants were based on purposeful sampling, which

postulates that individuals should be selected based on their anticipated richness and

relevance of expertise they contribute to the particular case (Gentles et al., 2015).

Therefore, interview participants were purposefully selected based on their expertise and

current position within the correctional education program. These individuals made up

the entirety of administrative roles within the correctional education program.

Considering the CoP framework, including commentary from individuals on both sides of

the partnership will help create a better understanding of how they create or fail to create

a positive organizational structure. Also, participants were purposefully selected because

they were in positions that allow them to make decisions about the structure, daily

process, and oversight of the correctional education program. In this case, three of the

participants work for the community college and one for the sheriff's department. Due to

the high probability of identifiability, the job title and organizational affiliation of each

individual are kept anonymous.

Participants were asked to engage in a semi-structured interview that lasted

between 60 and 90 minutes. Interview questions focused on how administrative structure

impacted the decision of factors such as but not limited to, course selection, faculty and

program evaluation, program goals, and meeting occupational needs of students.

Additionally, participants were asked questions regarding the benefits and challenges of

the program structure. All participants were asked the same six-core interview questions,

however, follow-up questions varied based on the responses received. Administrative

documents include but are not limited, to course completion reports, budgetary documents, course offerings, syllabi, a new employee manual, and a program audit. The ability to use multiple sources of data is a strength of the case study method and creates triangulated evidence (Yin, 2009).

The selection criteria and the fact that the administrative board is relatively small limited the number of participants in this study. The selected participants were recommended via a gatekeeper at the community college (Gaikwad, 2017). This individual made the data collection process smoother by providing names, contact information, and permission to interview administrative staff. The gatekeeper also provided access to numerous documents that offered insight into the vocational program. Participation in this study was voluntary and participants were informed that their responses to the interview would remain confidential. Furthermore, this study had full approval from the author's institutional review board as well as the participating community college's review board. All names that follow are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Data Collection & Analysis

I conducted four semi-structured interviews as the sole researcher in this study. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, and was completed in-person either at the interviewee's office or the correctional facility office, based on the preference of the participant. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. For the first round of coding, the researcher worked on a hard copy of transcripts. This is recommended for first-time and small-scale qualitative projects (Saldaña, 2015). In the second round of coding, QDA Minor was used to facilitate Descriptive Coding (Saldaña, 2015). By

assigning codes to data, the basic topic of the passage was identified and then grouped into major themes (Miles et al., 2014). Along with interviews, I conducted a document analysis and coded 10 administrative documents and labeled them A through J (See Appendix A). By collecting and analyzing multiple sources of data, I aimed to test the validity of my data (Patton, 1999). Furthermore, I drew on my conceptual framework, CoP by Wenger (1998), to support and explain my findings on the implementation of correctional education programs, and the partnership between a college and sheriff's department.

Findings

Research Question: How do a community college and the local sheriff's department partner to make decisions and implement a correctional education program?

    (a) What factors facilitate or impede the success of the partnership?

After coding the interviews and documents, two overarching themes emerged from the data. The first theme explains the day-to-day decision making that is shared between the two organizations. The collaborative nature of their decision making helps this CoP function by establishing clear roles and responsibilities for each organization, providing evidence for how this group is mutually engaged and participates in a joint enterprise. The intricacies of the decision-making process are discussed as *Collaborative Decision Making*. The second theme that emerged was the impact that each organization's mission and philosophy have on the program. The differences in these beliefs can at times impede the success and overall effectiveness of the partnership, highlighting a deficiency in their CoP in terms of a shared repertoire. In this section

titled: *Cultural Differences*, the differences in beliefs between the two organizations, and

how administrators on both ends work in a CoP to serve students are discussed.

Collaborative Decision Making

With the creation of the partnership in 1973, the community college and sheriff's

department created a Memorandum of Understanding (Document I). This memorandum

is periodically updated by both organizations and outlines the duties that should be

performed by each party, as summarized in Appendix B.

Interview data indicated that, in compliance with the Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU), the administrators at both the sheriff's department and

community college know and understand the role that their institution plays. John, an

administrator for the community college, affirmed that his institution "must maintain

control of the curriculum." John elaborated:

> [The] community college must maintain control of the curriculum. If they do not
>
> have control of the curriculum, that jeopardizes the accreditation of the entire
>
> institution. So we have to make sure that we can control the integrity of the
>
> curriculum, which is a faculty-based decision.

Therefore, perhaps due in large part to the MOU, the two organizations that make up the

CoP have found balance in tasks. Additionally, the MOU provides a foundation for their

mutual engagement by laying out what and how the individuals in this CoP operate.

When referring to the shared burden of financing the program, Dustin explained,

"that's the partnership between the community college and the Sheriff's office, you do

this, and we'll do that." The idea that each organization had laid out responsibilities was a

sentiment shared by administrators on both ends of the program.

As an administrator for the sheriff's department, Abby provides security for the classrooms, finds classroom space, creates schedules, keeps up to date on student enrollment, and completes a slew of other tasks. She mentioned that "sometimes the college does more and sometimes the sheriff's department does a little bit more. It just depends on what the decision is." On the sheriff's department side, Abby must follow a clear chain-of-command. For tasks such as approving the use of the sheriff's logo for posters, she explains, "that kind of stuff and some things we have to take it up the chain of command and get approval to do it." And so, at first glance it seems that with plainly laid out responsibilities for each party, the community college and sheriff's department can accomplish their tasks and work as a productive CoP.

However, a clear outline of how and who should make the selections of course offerings has been left out of the memorandum, highlighting a deficit in the groups mutual engagement. In an unwritten negotiation between the two organizations, the sheriff's department makes demands for classes, and, in turn, the community college provides these courses to students as they are capable. When asked how class offerings were selected, Dustin, an administrator for the community college explained that the priority was choosing classes that would help students find employment once released, followed by "number two is . . . our partnership with the sheriff's department's office; they make recommendations as to what type of classes that they would like to see and if we can facilitate that, we do." This was affirmed by John, who noted that the sheriff himself often holds more power in this decision than what is let on by the sheriff's department:

The sheriff's department might say, well, we would like to see this, this and this, and so they would bring those perspectives back to the faculty committee, and the faculty committee will work with the department chair to see that takes place. The sheriff said we want A, B, and C, and we make A, B, and C happen. We find the courses, we make the syllabus, we find instructors, we get the instructional materials, we get the books, the textbooks, and we say, there you go.

Abby, an administrator for the sheriff's department concluded that,

The courses are determined between myself and the college side. We take a look at the industry-based courses, those things that would provide the inmate with skills that will make them marketable, skills so they can be job-ready when they leave the program. And that is pretty much what my responsibility is.

In terms of course offerings, this is a portion of the MOU that should be updated. To create a stronger mutual engagement, members of the CoP should meet regularly to hash out these decisions and continually update documents. By updating the MOU to outline course selection roles and responsibilities, CoP members will improve their mutual engagement and be better informed and prepared to make structural decisions.

In terms of job-readiness, the program directors work together to add and maintain courses that are suitable for incarcerated students post-release. In a 2017 audit performed by the CEA, the auditor mentions that "this program staff shows ongoing dedication to providing new, relevant programming to meet the needs of even more segments of the population" (Nealon, 2017, p. 7). This collaborative nature stems back to the overall goals of the program. In the *Pre-Service Training New Hire* booklet given to all new staff members during orientation, the first page lays out the goals of the education

program. The first goal listed is for "program classes structured to meet the need of the inmate/student." The second goal is "structured learning to develop marketable skills for the workforce" (Correctional Education Program, 2018, p.2). Additionally, when asked about the goals of the program, John, a college administrator, responded that,

> There are several outcomes we have with corrections, one of which is we want to provide them with up to date occupational skill training in conjunction with a transformative cognitive perspective.

In response to the same question, Abby, the sheriff's department program director mentioned that "[The goal is] to provide solid training initiatives that will prevent offenders from re-offending and hopefully that they become gainfully employed with those skills."

Drawing on the CoP framework, administrators in these organizations are dedicated to a joint enterprise, as evidenced by their commitment to creating and sustaining the correctional education program for the benefit of offering students skills that can help them gain employment post-release and reduce recidivism. However, it should be noted that the ambiguity and potential outdatedness of the MOU on certain matters, such as course selection, can lead to miscommunication about how to carry out the joint enterprise between the community college and sheriff's department.

Cultural Differences

Included in the *Pre-Service Training New Hire* booklet, as part of each new staff training, is the mission and philosophy for both the sheriff's department and community college as it relates to the vocational correctional education program (Correctional Education Program, 2018, p.2). The mission statement written by the community college

highlights the opportunity for students to become "viable and productive citizens within the community" (Correctional Education Program, 2018, p.2), through quality workforce, vocational, or academic training. On the other hand, the philosophy statement written by the sheriff's department notes that the "Sheriff's Office is committed to strong law enforcement, crime control, and fiscal responsibility. Inmate Education is seen as a viable means of providing positive workforce/vocational programs designed to rehabilitate offenders" (Correctional Education Program, 2018, p.2). The Sheriff's Office statement goes on to say that the correctional education program is "structured to provide the offenders with entry-level skills to enter into the workforce or a vocation" (Correctional Education Program, 2018, p.2). Based on this document, we can see that both parties view themselves as part of the rehabilitation process that helps these individuals become contributing members of society once released. However, the sheriff's department completes its objective through a commitment to law enforcement for offenders, while the community college seeks to create a body of citizens that positively contribute to their community. This may allude to the absence or neglect of a shared repertoire between the two organizations.

In the interviews, participants weighed in on their thoughts about each organization's mission. Overall, employees of the college were more likely to refer to incarcerated individuals as students', while the law enforcement employee was more likely to refer to these individuals as offenders. As an employee of the sheriff's department, Abby perceived that "for the community college it's education and no training or rehabilitation. On the correction side, it's correction." However, she noted that her job entails her to be the buffer between the beliefs of the college and those of the

correctional staff. She tried to "create an avenue for the [Sheriff's Department] staff to be able to see that human side. That these are individuals who made a mistake." She admitted:

> Officers, deputies, and sheriffs have the responsibility to protect and serve the public. You're going to have those who have that mindset and that's it. . . . all they see is you're a criminal, and this is where you need to be.

The idea that the individuals in the program are *inmates* instead of *students* is articulated in multiple documents written and distributed by the sheriff's department. The Recruiting and Screening Handbook, is used by jail staff to determine the eligibility and placement of students in courses. In this handbook, the title of the program is referred to as *Inmate Education* (Sheriff's Office, 2018, p.1). Additionally, in two separate emails written by the sheriff's department administration, incarcerated students are referred to as inmates (Sheriff's Office, 2019). On the other hand, the community college gives out the *Instructional Program Review* to faculty members to fill out every four years (Community College, 2014). The information provided in this review makes recommendations for improvement and resources needed by program faculty. In every possible section of this review, incarcerated individuals are referred to as *students*. In this document, they are never referred to as *inmates*. Again, these documents highlight the need for adjustment to the CoP shared repertoire.

Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that due to the roles that each organization plays, administrators often feel that they are not aligned in their view of students and how they should be treated. For example, John posited that the community college "wants corrections to serve as an agent of change. We're not saying we're going

to change you [incarcerated student]; we're just going to give you [them] some tools to help you [them] start your [their] own change." He believes that the sheriff's department and the community college have similar interests in that "they don't want to see repeat offenders. They want to see people do better." Still, he questions whether the "sheriff organization views its role as an agent of change, or as a traditional command and control operation."

As a teacher and administrator in the program, Rachel believes that the courses aim to keep students from recidivating and help them obtain a job post-release. In her opinion, the community college takes a "holistic approach to corrections education. It is a hundred or thousand percent about rehabilitation and not about punishment." She goes on to say that on the sheriff's department side, there are two types of individuals.

> There are people who believe in rehabilitation education. There are people who believe in punishment. And sometimes that's a very difficult thing because there are people who aren't necessarily as helpful and don't necessarily facilitate us educating students in the environment because they believe the students are hostile, are criminals, and need to be punished.

Dustin, a community college administrator, also admits that the differences in mindsets are challenging: "Part of my job is to get those two cultures, education and law enforcement, to work as closely as possible. My biggest issue is getting law enforcement and education to understand each other. They have different cultures and goals."

In the end, there is evidence that the philosophy and culture of the community college and sheriff's department differ. Even though the MOU defines most tasks, findings from the document and interview analysis clearly highlight the need for the CoP

to establish similar language when referring to students in the program. By doing so, the CoP can strengthen their shared repertoire and establish a more effective partnership in terms of equipping students with skills for life post-release.

Limitations

The most notable limitation of this case study is the small number of participants. However, there is a shortlist of individuals that make administrative decisions for the correctional department at both the community college and sheriff's department. To get a clear understanding of the CoP, the study only included those that met the participant criteria. Therefore, the only participants interviewed were those that make direct structural decisions for the program. More so, the triangulation of data between interviews and administrative documents results in a broader understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Carter et al., 2014). Though this case study has a relatively small sample size, the individuals and documents used provide rich data to introduce new and transferable findings.

In the end, this study constitutes an exemplary case study for its ability to be significant and introduce unknown or unfamiliar findings (Yin, 2009). This study aimed to be exemplary by being one of the first case studies to use CoP literature as a lens to analyze the partnership between a sheriff's department and a community college. Therefore, the emphasis of this study is not on the generalizability of the findings or interpretations, so much as it is on its ability to be transferable to a similar case (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 1997).

Discussion

In recent years, politicians have aimed to reduce recidivism and subsequently the overall incarcerated population. At the same time, community colleges are increasingly popular partners for correctional institutions to provide and expand education to incarcerated students. This study is timely and nationally relevant based on recent policy changes and the increasing number of community college-county correctional institution partnerships. As issues of racial injustice highlight disparities within the criminal justice system that continue to disproportionally impact people of color in this country, there is an immediate need to address the differences in missions between partnering community colleges and correctional institutions, and to realize the potential that these types of programs have on providing educational opportunities to the disproportionate number of Black inmates.

I set out to better understand how partnerships between community colleges and sheriff's departments can affect the daily decisions and overall implementation of correctional education programs. Also, I sought to better understand which factors can aid or impede the success of such a partnership.

Using the case study approach, the partnership between a community college and a sheriff's office was examined to address the following research questions: *How do a community college and the local sheriff's department partner to make decisions and implement a correctional education program? (a) What factors facilitate or impede the success of the partnership?* From the interview and document analysis, two themes emerged to answer the research questions. The first theme, Collaborative Decision Making, discusses how the partnership uses the MOU to set clear roles, and how any ambiguity in the MOU can lead to miscommunication within the partnership. In regards

to the CoP framework, the findings of the first theme suggest the need to strengthen aspects of mutual engagement and joint enterprise. The second theme, Cultural Differences, explores the underlying motivation of each organization and how these impact the relationship between members of the CoP. The findings of the second theme suggest that this organization has a deficit shared repertoire. In the remainder of this section, I will discuss findings as they pertain to: how community colleges implement vocational correctional education programs, a theoretical understanding of CoP, contributions this study makes to the literature, and implications for future research.

On the surface, initial findings from the document analysis indicated that with a detailed MOU, almost all decisions can be handled by the appropriate committee. The interview data confirmed that both organizations understood their roles and worked together for the benefit of the student. However, there is a need for CoP members to meet regularly to discuss discrepancies in course selection and update the MOU. The need for these meetings is expressed in Corrections to College California (2018). As part of the best practices mentioned, maintaining an updated MOU is among the list.

The suggestion made by the toolkit is to amend the MOU on a yearly or bi-yearly basis. In this case, the MOU referenced was last updated in 2007 and may need to be revised to reflect the current realities of the correctional education program. To maintain and improve upon their mutual engagement, this CoP should host regular monthly meetings to keep partners and leadership informed. Both Corrections to College California (2018) and Delaney et al. (2016) suggested keeping the college and sheriff's department leadership informed of progress through monthly meetings. Here, supervisors can share their insights, recognize exemplary staff, address concerns, and make

suggestions for the future of the program. Additionally, these meetings promote shared ownership of program successes and difficulties.

Secondly, based on the findings in terms of contradictory philosophy and culture (i.e., shared repertoire) of the two organizations, this misalignment has highlighted the historical and systemic differences between educational and correctional institutions. The community college states their role as purely rehabilitative and that they aim to create a more productive citizen through education. In administrative and staff documents they refer to this population as *students*. Additionally, as a community college, it is part of their history and mission to educate all members of society regardless of current social standing, socioeconomic status, or educational ability. On the other hand, the sheriff's department states that its mission is to equip incarcerated individuals with skills for employment post-release. They refer to this population as *inmates* or *offenders* that need to be rehabilitated. Historically, the jail sought to partner with the community college due to an increase in crime and an influx of incarcerated individuals with ample idol time.

Thus, if only looking at the program goal statement as evidence, it could easily be concluded that these two organizations have the same end goal: whether through rehabilitation or punishment, they aim to equip students with the ability to succeed in the outside world. However, after analyzing further document and interview data, the discrepancies between how the community college and the sheriff's department views the population is the product of deeply rooted differences between the missions of the organizations. For the community college, these are students, and it is their fundamental goal to educate all students. For the sheriff's department, the incarcerated individuals are criminals, and it is their goal to keep citizens of the community safe. While both

organizations have similar goals of reducing recidivism, their perceptions of the student body are clearly not aligned. In an ideal world, the philosophy of the sheriff's department would shift to perceive the individuals in this program as students.

In a practical world, as partners, the community college and sheriff's department should place greater emphasis on the language used in their MOU and other program documents. Furthermore, the sheriff's department should consider additional trainings for their staff on the racial and systemic issues that pervade the criminal justice system. One way to deepen the partnership between the two organizations would be if the community college provided this education and training for the sheriff's department staff. In the end, the sheriff's department staff can begin to see these individuals less as criminals needing to serve time as a form of crime and punishment, and more as people needing an opportunity to better themselves and their community. By revising the MOU and program documents, and collaborating on trainings for staff members, this correctional education program can strengthen their mission of offering students the opportunity to become viable and productive citizens within their community, without working against each other philosophically.

Delaney et al. (2016) discussed the complexities of the relationship between correctional staff and faculty. They noted that instructors may interpret the staff's strict adherence to facility rules as a lack of support for the overall program. This may lead to alienation of those that may have otherwise supported the program. Therefore, it is essential to provide training and orientation sessions that cross-train the faculty and staff members. All new instructors should be trained on correctional facility rules and procedures, rules about restricted materials and how to gain course material approval,

rules for interacting with students, rules about technology, and how to request assistance from correctional staff (Delaney et al., 2016). Additionally, correctional facility staff should be trained on how to support the goals and operations of the program. These could include sessions of the importance of postsecondary education, program goals and expectations, and how education can reduce recidivism. Additionally, the sheriff's department administration should create spaces for staff to share their concerns or disagreements about program details (Corrections to College California, 2018). In the end, each side of the partnership must recognize the role that each member plays, respect these role differences, and be prepared to compromise.

Until now, the CoP framework had yet to be used to explore partnerships in correctional settings; however, the use of CoP is growing in education research and other fields (Kimble & Hildreth, 2008). For this paper, I focused on the three key elements that make up a CoP: Mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). In this case, these individuals engage daily in the correctional education program; they are mutually engaged. These four individuals work together towards an agreed-upon end goal; a joint enterprise. They work towards that end goal by creating an MOU, holding meetings, and creating routines; a shared repertoire. At the same time, the need for improvements in each of these categories should not be overlooked.

In the simplest sense, the four participants make up a CoP. However, as seen by the interview and document data, partnerships can set norms and goals without truly sharing the same beliefs about students. For this particular case to improve their CoP and overall partnership, they should consider revisiting the MOU, their respective mission statements, and training/orientation documents to include similar language when referring

to the population served. Specifically, the community college and jail should meet and discuss how their current philosophies and perspectives shape the way the program is run. To this end, though the partnering organizations have different cultures and historical missions, they can work together for the same goal. As an implication for future partnerships, community colleges and the sheriff's departments should draft a shared mission statement during the program planning stages, and routinely update their MOU to ensure goal alignment and program effectiveness.

Previous literature found that participation in a correctional education program was positively correlated with reducing recidivism rates (Chappell, 2004; Davis et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 1995; Siegel, 1997; Wilson et al., 2000). Research also informed us that correctional education could improve incarcerated individuals' vocational and academic skills (Brown & Rios, 2014; Gaes, 2008; Messemer & Valentine, 2004; Reed, 2015; Shippen et al., 2010). Importantly, these vocational and academic skills gains can be attained through non-traditional methods; plumping programs for women, and internet use for Adult Basic Education classes (Brown & Rios, 2014; Reed, 2015). Though these previous studies were important for the context of this study, the majority of correctional education research overlooks the structural decisions made by partnering organizations; decisions that in turn can impact a program's role in student outcomes. Future research needs to highlight the complexities of decision making and the cultural differences that determine what and how programs are implemented. With this case study, I began to unravel how the complex partnership between two organizations impacts the decision making and implementation of a correctional education program, and what factors aid or impede the success of partnerships.

Future research should continue to explore the growing number of partnerships between education and correctional institutions. For example, additional case studies could look to uncover the decision making processes behind the specifics of course offerings (length of courses, eligibility criteria, credit hours awarded). Additionally, the field of correctional education could benefit from further research on the perspectives of teachers in this setting. Using the narrative approach, we could better understand the unique experiences of these faculty members. In terms of CoPs, there is no other known literature on these groups within correctional settings. Thus, future research should look to better understand how these groups work in correctional education partnerships but also for a range of partnerships that community colleges are involved in (e.g., with four-year institutions, high schools, employers, and vocational/technical schools), emphasizing how to strengthen these relationships. Lastly, as policies such as the First Step Act surface in Washington, there is an immediate interest to lower the rate of incarceration. Policies such as these can look towards this and similar research to inform their decisions on how to improve education opportunities and job opportunities for incarcerated individuals post-release.

Conclusion

With over 10 million individuals admitted to jails each year, there has never been a more important time in our nation's history to create criminal justice reform than now. More so, supporting community colleges that bridge the gap between education and incarceration has become politically and financially relevant for our country. By furthering the research on partnerships between community colleges and correctional

institutions, we can inform policymakers and administrators on how to best serve

incarcerated students and lower the rate of mass incarceration.

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Appendix A

Description of Correctional Education Administrative Documents Received from the

Community College

Document Letter	Description
A	This document is a copy of the program review used by the community college. Every four years, the community college uses this document to complete a full evaluation of its programs.
B	This document is a monthly update to the Sheriff's Office on the happenings of the correctional education program. This document includes enrollment numbers and updates on course offerings.
C	This document is an example of email correspondence between the administrative staff for the Sheriff's Office and the Major for the Sheriff's Office. It outlines the communication taken to acquire laptops in classrooms.
D	This document is an example of email correspondence between the Sheriff's Office administrative staff and the Chief for the Sheriff's Office. It outlines the communication taken to improve course offerings for women.
E	This pre-service training booklet is given to new hires during the orientation process. It includes mission statements and philosophies from both the community college and the Sheriff's Department. It also includes general orientation material such as dress code, behavior, and safety instructions.
F	This document details all courses offered at one of the correctional facilities. It outlines the class name, time and days offered, and the faculty member responsible for each course.
G	This document includes course names, course numbers, course days/times, and faculty members responsible for each location. This document also includes

	course enrollment and completion of information for the period between September 2017-September 2018.
H	This document is used by the Sheriff's Office to select incarcerated students for courses. This recruiting and screening handbook outlines the qualifications, disqualifications, and the proper steps to take for enrollment.
I	This document is a memorandum of understanding between the community college and the Sheriff's Office. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of each institution and is signed by representatives of each. This document was last updated in November 2007.
J	This document is an audit report from the most recent audit completed in July 2017. It includes an overall review of the program and recommendations to stay in compliance with the accreditation board.

Appendix B

Negotiated Roles and Responsibilities between Community College and Sheriff's Office,

Updated November 16th, 2007

The sheriff's department will:	The community college will:
Provide and maintain a suitable classroom, laboratory, and office space at all SD locations under this agreement.	Employ instructors and staff that have satisfactorily completed the background investigation and are acceptable to both organizations to deliver instruction to qualified inmates at the facilities.
Provide deputies at all locations to maintain security for all instructors and staff.	Provide all curriculum, instructional materials, supplies, and equipment necessary for the operation of the programs at facilities.
Assign education deputies and classification deputies to recruit the inmates from the general inmate population in adequate numbers to maintain an average daily attendance as dictated by space and equipment available for each class as agreed upon by SD and CC.	Conduct the classes in compliance with the rules and guidelines of state education agencies.
Actively recruit students who will be able to complete the instructional program as enrolled.	The CC will waive all tuition and fees for qualified inmates to offset the cost of classrooms, maintenance, utilities, and security deposits provided by the SD.
Provide accessibility to SD facilities for CC faculty and staff during agreed-upon hours of operation at each SD facility.	Not be liable for any damages to the facility of equipment of the SD resulting in the operation of the services described in this document
Supplement supplies and equipment to CC classes as they deem appropriate.	Not be liable for injury to an inmate student resulting from his/her participation in the programs described in this document except as may be waived under state law.
Approve faculty and staff to work in SD facilities following satisfactorily completed background investigations.	Provide students who complete all courses with a CC certificate of completion.
Provide space for CC staff to conduct activities related to the adult education project such as assessment, enrollment, data collection, and secure space to maintain records.	Upon request by the student, refer the students' transcript to be analyzed by a CC dean for proper award of credit as appropriate.

Ensure that SD staff and students will receive all appropriate services without regard to race, color, disability, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or military status.	Assist the students through the instructional staff and the CC job placement services in obtaining employment upon their release.
Provide support services including referrals, facilities, counseling, and health services.	Correspond with a designated SD contact person to confirm adjustments in service schedules, periodic event s and activities, teacher assignments, attendance, and other service operations.
	Provide SD with a 5-day written notice on the closure of any workforce education and/or adult education class for which an average daily attendance of 15 is not maintained.
	Provide courses for students that will articulate with on-campus courses and programs so that students may work toward CC marketable skills and level one certifications and associate degrees.

Note. In this table, SD stands for the local sheriff's department and CC stands for the community college.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the administrative and programmatic structure of the

    current program?

2. Can you describe evaluation practices of the adult education program or courses

    within the program?

    a) How does the program meet projected occupational needs of its students?

    b) How does the program accommodate for the needs of diverse students?

3. Can you describe the ways in which your institution assess' instructional quality

    of instructors?

    a) How does the assessment of teaching compare to other instructional settings?

4. Tell me about assessment of student learning in the program.

    a) Can you describe the day to day assessment of learning given to students?

    b) Can you describe how assessment is tailored for specific student needs?

5. Can you describe some of the challenges that your institution continues to face

    regarding the program structure for the adult education program?

    a) What suggestions would you give to improve these?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss?

Chapter III – Research Paper Two

How a Partnership between a Community College and Local Sheriff's Department

is Structured to Provide Workforce Focused Correctional Education

For many correctional education programs, federal and state policies have limited the budget allocated to support their efforts. Notably, the most detrimental policy was the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which took away Pell Grant eligibility to individuals incarcerated in state, federal, and private prisons (OVAE, 2009). In recent years, there has been a resurgence of political support for criminal justice reform, particularly from the rising costs of mass incarceration. In 2016, the Obama administration launched the Second Chance Pell pilot program. With this, a select number of U.S colleges and universities provided college education to incarcerated individuals with the help of Pell grants (U.S Department of Education, 2016). In 2020, an expansion of the Second Chance Pell experiment added 130 schools to the pilot (DOE, 2020).

With this expansion, two-thirds of the newly selected schools were two-year institutions. The role of two-year colleges in providing correctional education is indisputable; in 2018, over 55% of postsecondary institutions offering programming to incarcerated individuals were public two-year colleges (Castro et al., 2018). Now, as the federal government voted to lift the long-standing ban on Pell Grants (Green, 2020), community colleges will have access to additional funding sources. With additional funding sources now available, attention is turning on how to ensure the quality of the academic programs approved for federal dollars (Burke, 2021). Thus, research on how partnerships between community colleges and sheriff's departments are structured to

offer marketable skills to incarcerated individuals is timely and will contribute relevant research to the national agenda on mass incarceration.

Of the over 6 million individuals currently under correctional supervision in the United States, nearly 700,000 of them are released each year, and roughly 94% of all incarcerated adults will one day be released back to society (Strait & Eaton, 2017). For these individuals, participating in any type of correctional education can increase the chances of employment post-release (Davis et al., 2013). At the same time, incarcerated individuals tend to have lower levels of education and work skills than the general population (Davis et al., 2013). These individuals often lack vocational skills and a steady history of employment (Davis et al., 2013), are disproportionately male, Black, and Hispanic, and relatively younger than the general population (Rampey et al., 2016). With 70% of jobs requiring some education beyond high school by 2027, jobs for those without a college degree are becoming fewer (Blumenstyk, 2020). Thus, access to correctional education while incarcerated can support successful reentry for the most marginalized populations.

Expanding access to postsecondary education can result in reduced recidivism and, in turn, decrease incarceration costs across states by $365.8 million per year (Oakford et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the majority of incarcerated individuals have not had access to post-secondary education. For the academic year 2009-2010, only 6% of the incarcerated population was enrolled in vocational or academic postsecondary education (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011). More recently, the Vera Institute reported that while 64% of incarcerated people are academically eligible to enroll in postsecondary education (they have a GED or high school diploma), only 9% received a certificate from

a college or trade school while incarcerated (Oakford et al., 2019). Now, as legislation

has been signed to remove the ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals, there will

be a growing interest in providing postsecondary correctional education. Importantly,

research will be needed to ensure that programs are offering high-quality education that

offers justice-involved individuals the resources they need to successfully reenter society.

This case study seeks to add to the growing research on correctional education

partnerships between community colleges and the sheriff's departments. The purpose of

this study is to examine one case of a partnership between a community college and a

sheriff's department to understand how the partnership is structured to offer educational

opportunities that build entry-level workforce skills. This will be analyzed by answering

the following research questions: (1) *How is a partnership between a community college*

and sheriff's department structured to provide educational opportunities that develop

marketable skills for the workforce? (2) *Which structures within this partnership benefit*

or impede the development of students' marketable skills?

Using the Structural Frame (Bolman & Deal, 2017) to examine how the program

meets labor market demands and ensures the employment of students, this paper provides

recommendations for actions that the program can take to be more effective in terms of

student outcomes. The Structural Frame will be used to analyze interviews and document

data to better understand how the overall structure of the program aids or impedes its

ability to offer high-quality educational opportunities that build marketable workforce

skills. Additionally, an in-depth analysis of this particular correctional education program

is provided by using the case study approach (Yin, 2009). The case study approach

coupled with the triangulation (Stake, 2008) of interviews and document data, will

provide a rich description of this case and offer transferable findings to similar

partnerships.

Review of Literature

In the following section, I first present relevant literature on the impact that

different types of correctional education programs have on recidivism, employment, and

wages. Secondly, I summarize the extant literature on the role of educational programs in

responding to labor market demands. In this portion of the literature review, I highlight

the role of community colleges to prepare students for the workforce and discuss the

limited literature on how community college partnerships in correctional education

function. The goal of this literature review is to frame the purpose of this study; and to

examine how the structure of a program benefits or impedes its ability to provide

workforce skills to incarcerated individuals.

Benefits of Correctional Education

Research in the field of correctional education has focused on its ability to reduce

the rate of recidivism for justice-involved individuals (Aos et al., 2006; Lipton et al.,

1975; Mackenzie, 2006; Wilson et al., 2000). The RAND Corporation reported that

participating in any form of correctional education reduces the chances of reoffending by

up to 13% compared to those who did not participate in correctional education (Davis et

al., 2013). However, scholars in this field caution that relying on recidivism to measure

the effectiveness of correctional education is a flawed method (Butts & Schiraldi, 2018;

King & Elderbroom, 2014; Klingele, 2019). By solely focusing on recidivism, agencies

are relieved of their responsibility for other outcomes such as employment, education,

and housing (Butts & Schiraldi, 2018). Additionally, recidivism research often fails to

account for differences in community and social context (Sharkey & Faber, 2014) and

reinforces racial and class biases that underlay the criminal justice system (Butts &

Schiraldi, 2018). Thus, the remainder of the literature in this section will focus on

positive labor market outcomes that may come from participating in correctional

education such as employment and wage gains, and present the challenges that formerly

incarcerated individuals face even if they participate in correctional education.

It is important to note that the majority of correctional education research

conducted and therefore discussed below are studies conducted from prison populations.

Though this study, in particular, looks at the partnership between a community college

and a sheriff's department that oversees the county jail, there is very little, if any, research

that examines correctional education programs in jails. Due to the nature and purpose of

jails, individuals typically serve short sentences (25-day average) (Zeng, 2018), which

makes participating in and completing a correctional education program more difficult.

On the other hand, individuals in prison typically serve sentences of at least a year, giving

them more time to participate in and complete a program.

Labor Market Returns and Challenges of Correctional Education

Participating in any type of correctional education has been found to improve the

likelihood of employment post-release compared to those that did not take any courses

while incarcerated (Davis et al., 2013). However, there is currently no consensus on the

most effective type of instruction for employment. For example, seminal studies by

Saylor and Gaes (1985, 1997, 2001) examined the effect of vocational and apprenticeship

training on the long-term job outlook for the participant. Their results concluded that

those who participated in a vocational program or apprenticeship were more likely to be

employed in the first twelve months post-release, compared to someone who did not participate in correctional education.

In a meta-analysis of research on the effectiveness of correctional education, the RAND Corporation found that individuals who participated in vocational training programs had a 28% higher chance of employment than individuals who did not complete any correctional education. In comparison, taking a non-vocational ABE, GED, or post-secondary education (PSE) course only gave students an 8% higher chance of employment post-release, relative to those who did not complete any correctional education (Davis et al., 2013). Others like Cho and Tyler (2008) found that completion of an Adult Basic Education (ABE) course had a positive relationship with post-release quarterly employment rates for both minority and White populations. Additionally, Brown (2015) analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY). Using information from 442 previously incarcerated individuals, he concluded that a college education increases labor market participation by 9 weeks and reduces unemployment by an average of 3.5 weeks. In other words, college educated individuals hold jobs longer and are unemployed for less time than those who do not have a college education. He found no link between a high school degree and labor market participation but did find that a high school degree was better than a GED in terms of overall labor market benefits.

Also using NLSY, Flatt & Jacobs (2018) compared three program types and their effects on gainful employment. They examined school-based, pre-employment, and post-employment programs using linear mixed models to compare weeks worked and income for 700 previously incarcerated individuals. They concluded that school-based programs,

such as GED and remedial courses, were not related to gainful employment. Pre-employment courses, such as vocational courses, were also not related to gainful employment. However, for those that completed a quality post-employment program, a blend between vocational education, prison industries, job-search services, and work-release programs, experienced an increase of income of 19.6% and an increase in the likelihood of being employed by 34.1% (Flatt & Jacobs, 2018). More so, Tyler and Kling (2007) found that inmates who left prison with a GED had higher wage opportunities than those that did not. Specifically, the GED holding individual would make mean quarterly earnings of $181 more than an uncredentialed dropout offender in the first year. They also found that education courses while incarcerated would increase skill, or human capital, and could give individuals the confidence of knowing that they were qualified for the job they applied to post-release. Though there is still much to learn about the effectiveness of different types of correctional education programs, researchers have agreed that any type of programming while incarcerated is better than none in terms of employability outcomes post-release.

Still, opportunities for employment and obtaining a good-paying job post-release are affected by age, race, educational attainment, labor market trends, and the type of employment available. Thus, the marginalized populations that are overrepresented in the justice system did not benefit from educational (Rampey et al., 2016) or economic (Couloute & Kopf, 2018) prosperity before incarceration and may have a hard time finding meaningful employment post-release (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). For example, Steffey (2015) found that three months post-release, white men were more likely to be employed compared to non-white men. Employed men were also more likely to be

married, to report that they were not limited in their daily activities by physical health

problems, and scored higher on the physical and the mental health scales 30 days before

release. Employed men were also more likely to have at least a high school degree,

general education degree (GED), or have participated in job training while incarcerated.

Other scholars, like Looney and Turner (2018) argued that finding employment

post-release is difficult and that the wages earned may not be enough to deter criminal

behavior. In the first year post-release, ex-offenders had poor employment outcomes in

the labor market, low earnings when working, and little attachment to the formal sector

(i.e., paying taxes). Using IRS data from over 2.8 million individuals incarcerated

between 2009-2013, they found that in the first year after release, 49% of ex-offenders

earn less than $500 annually, 32% earn between $500-$15,000, and only 20% earn more

than $15,000[1]. Similarly, research by Nally (2015), posits that ex-offenders are more

likely to compete for minimum wage jobs. When the country falls into economic

hardships, these jobs are less fruitful for those with criminal backgrounds. This study

used data from a 5-year follow-up of 6,561 inmates released in Indiana throughout 2005.

Findings suggested that the majority of jobs obtained before, during, and after the 2008

recession were temporary, minimum wage jobs. Eighty-seven percent of formerly

incarcerated individuals are classified as the *working poor*, reporting an annual income

lower than $20,000, and 66% made less than $10,000. Additionally, jobs that typically

hired ex-offenders, such as construction and manufacturing, decreased during the

recessionary period. Other important factors included educational attainment; individuals

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[1] According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in 2009, the poverty threshold for a single individual was $10,830 and $22,050 for a family of four.

without a high school degree recidivated at a rate of 55.9% compared to 46.2% of those

with a high school degree and 31% of those with a college education (Nally, 2015).

Other researchers have examined the misalignment between trades taught in

corrections education and current job market opportunities. Sabol (2007) researched the

labor market conditions and post-prison employment experience of 34,061 individuals. In

the two years post-release, the study found that someone who earned a vocational

certificate while incarcerated improved their likelihood of employment. However, these

benefits were often hindered by a mismatch between the trades offered in the vocational

courses and the post-release job opportunities available to them. Furthermore, labor

market trends created an even larger disadvantage for previously incarcerated individuals.

When the local county experienced a 1% increase in unemployment, from 4% to 5%, a

previously incarcerated individual's probability of exiting the initial spell of

unemployment (unemployment post-release) decreased by about 2%. This lowered the

overall probability of exiting unemployment from 16% to 14% (Sabol, 2007).

Overall, this portion of the research suggests that to increase student employment

in good-paying and labor market alignment jobs post-release, we need to be better

understand the outcomes of different correctional education programs. Additionally,

research has suggested that even though correctional education can improve the

likelihood of employment post-release, it cannot guarantee higher wages or erase

systemic disparities for marginalized communities. With the recent approval of Pell

Grants to individuals in prison, public, private, and for-profit educational institutions will

be jumping at the chance to offer education to incarcerated individuals. Thus, there is an

immediate need to understand how to provide a high-quality and equitable education to

this population. In the next section, I review how educational programs, specifically those

offered by community colleges, can be responsive to labor market demands.

Education & Labor Market Responsiveness

Most Americans believe that to get a good-paying job you must first obtain a

college education (Gallup, 2014; Mourshed et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2014). Thus, higher

education is considered instrumental for developing a productive workforce to meet the

changing demands of the global economy (Bardhan et al., 2013). However, measuring

how well higher education institutions align themselves with the labor market has proved

tricky and little evidence exists to link job-driven strategies to labor market outcomes and

to provide guidance on how to effectively approach labor market alignment (Cleary &

Van Noy, 2014). In the following two sections, I discuss relevant literature on the role of

community colleges to prepare individuals for the workforce and the obstacles they face

in aligning with the labor market. I also discuss how partnerships, particularly

correctional education partnerships, can work together to best serve students.

Community Colleges

As jobs requiring post-secondary education are on the rise (Carnevale et al.,

2013), community colleges are well-positioned to meet the needs of the economy

(MacAllum et al., 2004) as they are generally known for curricula development,

particularly concerning non-credit programs (Harmon & MacAllum, 2003). Coley (2000)

suggested that demographic trends, the demand for a postindustrial workforce, and the

relationship between education and income will increase the demand for community

colleges' programs and services. Rothwell et al. (2017) argued that with the many

challenges placed upon community colleges, their role in workforce development will continue to increase.

However, some are wary of community colleges' ability to respond to market needs promptly (National Academies of Science and Medicine, 2017). As Dougherty (1994) put it, the community college sector "dances to the rhythms of the labor market, but it rarely keeps very good time" (p. 67). Grosz (2017) found that the connection between community colleges and the labor market might be coming from student demand for programs in growing fields, rather than colleges expanding capacity. He concludes that these findings support the idea that administrative and budgetary restraints keep community colleges from keeping up with labor market changes. Rassen et al. (2014) similarly argued that colleges cite student demand as the main reason for opening or maintaining a program. Thus, they launch new programs without first ensuring that real jobs are available after graduation.

These criticisms have placed pressure on American community colleges to meet an emerging mission of responding to local economic conditions (Harmon & MacAllum, 2003). Thus, community colleges must actively consider the local and national economic environment and be able to deliver educational and training programs that directly address labor market needs, often in a very short time (Harmon & MacAllum, 2003).In response to these emerging demands of community colleges, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), created The Community College Labor Market Responsiveness (CCLMR) Initiative. The purpose of this work was to develop and distribute information that would enable community colleges to keep

pace with the needs of a diverse student body and a dynamic labor market (MacAllum et al., 2004). In this report, they define what it means to be a market-responsive college:

> A labor market responsive community college delivers programs and services that align with and seek to anticipate the changing dynamics of the labor market it serves. These programs and services address the educational and workforce development needs of both employers and students as part of the college's overall contribution to the social and economic vitality of its community (p. 7).

They also reported that market-driven community colleges share fundamental characteristics; they have leadership that is committed to the goal of making the college market responsive, internal response mechanisms that influence campus organizational structure and culture, conscious and deliberate efforts to nurture business and other partnerships, and thoughtful and strategic approaches to building stronger connections to the local economy (MacAllum et al., 2004). These findings are aligned with the work of Dougherty and Bakia (2000) which stated that market-responsive community colleges focus on meeting the needs of business and the local economy and work by Bailey and Morest (2003), which found that successful partnerships between students, businesses, industry, and the community are the key factors for effective economic development and workforce enhancement.

In the end, by using labor market data, community college leaders can make decisions about right-sizing existing programs, improving program quality, and closing programs with low returns (Rassen et al., 2014). This literature provides a starting place for understanding the critical role community colleges play in offering workforce education and how they can do this in a high-quality way. In the last section, I focus

specifically on how correctional education partnerships might work around various challenges to provide workforce education.

Correctional Education Partnerships

Cox-Peterson (2011) defined educational partnerships as

An agreement where two or more people or groups work together toward mutual goals and are created for a variety of reasons that include enhancing public relations, seeking additional funding, and working toward a particular cause or issue (p.5).

Partnerships between community colleges and correctional institutions can also be mutually beneficial endeavors (Thouin, 2021). For one, they allow community colleges to continue to be the leader in correctional education and increase revenue through student enrollment. Community colleges offer a low-cost alternative to postsecondary education, have favorable locations near correctional institutions, have missions to serve their entire surrounding community, and have expertise with similar student populations (Mukamal et al., 2015). At the same time, correctional institutions are interested in partnering with educational institutions because it can lower the chances of recidivism; one of the main goals of the justice-system. However, colleges and correctional institutions have historically different cultures (Thouin, 2021). While colleges seek to educate, most departments of corrections are tasked with the safety and rehabilitation of the incarcerated individuals (Brick & Ajinkya, 2020).

Effective partnerships exhibit "respect, understanding, appreciation of cultural and linguistic differences, shared common goals, accountability, high returns, meaningful goals to all parties, commitment, leadership, partner feedback, and buy-in." (Cox-

Peterson, 2011, p. 11). Importantly, partnerships are not one-sided. Thus, correctional education program administrators will want to create and revise as needed, a memorandum of understanding (MOU). "This will help both institutions create shared goals and mutual understanding of how to achieve them" (Walsh & Delaney, 2020, p.18). Additionally, partnerships should set mutually determined goals; maintain consistent communication; and realize their vision with shared resources (Brick & Ajinkya, 2020).

Though there is literature on how partnerships *should* work, there is still a lot to know and learn about how correctional education partnerships *do* work. Specifically, as policy in regards to Pell Grants shifts positively towards funding postsecondary education for incarcerated individuals, there is an immediate need to better understand how these types of programs can best serve students to rejoin the workforce post-release.

Along with national and state policy shifts, reports on creating beneficial partnerships between community colleges and sheriff's departments have recently been published by notable organizations such as the Vera Institute and Corrections to College California. In these reports, various challenges shared by correctional education programs are outlined and best-practices are discussed. One of these is choosing the right curriculum for students. Corrections to College California (2018) advises the community college to consider local labor market needs, the length of certificate programs, and whether the individual can find employment in that field with a criminal record when choosing which career and technical education (CTE) certificate programs to offer. In a 2020 report on starting postsecondary courses in correctional settings, the Vera Institute adds that colleges should deliver programs that are transferrable to multiple degrees or programs and that introduce students to possible pathways (Walsh & Delaney, 2020).

Another important piece to a successful program structure is to ensure that industry-standard technology is available. This will take communication between the correctional department to figure out what technologies are allowed and the approval process for new technologies. Access to industry-level technology is especially important for workforce education courses.

Similarly, a report was written by the U.S Department of Education (2009) in conjunction with the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, and the Office of Correctional Education detailed the partnerships of many states. One system in Texas, the Windham School District, takes into account similar factors. The Windham partnership serves over 900 students annually and offers a range of courses from vocational credit certificates, college non-credit certificates, and a small number of bachelor's degree programs. When selecting educational programs to offer, Windham considers the availability of facilities and labor market trends provided by the Texas Workforce Commission (DOE, 2009).

Likewise, the state of North Carolina focuses on offering courses that are credit-bearing and will help students complete a credential, with most of the awards being vocational credit and non-credit courses. Together with the Department of Corrections, the community colleges of North Carolina work closely to ensure that the course work offered reflects contemporary technology and workplace demands. In contrast, states such as New Mexico offer the majority of academic courses. The most awarded degree in this state is an associate of arts in general studies. Working with institutions of higher learning, program leaders focus on providing students with credit-bearing courses that they can transfer into academic courses post-release (DOE, 2009).

Like many of the correctional education programs across the country (Castro et al., 2018), the one in this case study is offered by a community college. To reduce recidivism, the partnership between the community college and sheriff's department considers labor market data, average student length of stay, and offers an array of non-college credit, certificate programs to build entry-level workforce skills. Thus, this study joins the present national conversation on criminal justice reform and adds to the renewed interest in correctional education programs that reduce recidivism rates and help formerly incarcerated individuals gain meaningful employment (Oakford et al., 2019).

Conceptual Framework

This case study grounds its findings and analysis on the book, *Reframing Organizations*, by Bolman & Deal (2017). The overall goal of using this framework is to better understand how the structure of the program is enhancing or impeding its goal of offering students an educational experience that is effective in building marketable skills and improving student employability outcomes. Thus, this framework guided the analysis of interview and document data.

In this book, Bolman & Deal (2017) posit that managers and leaders can strengthen their organizations through the use of four frames. In this case, a frame is synonymous with a map or tool which, helps managers develop and carry out plans. The four frames introduced in this text are structural, human resource, political, and symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Each of these four frames independently helps "managers and leaders find clarity and meaning amid the confusion of organizational life" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, pg. 40). Though managers may reframe their organization using all four tools, this study will look specifically at how the correctional education program can

reframe using the structural lens. By focusing specifically on the structural lens, I can analyze how program administrators "create rules, policies, procedures, systems, and hierarchies to coordinate diverse activities into a unified effort" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 17). If one or multiple of these aspects of the structure are misaligned with program goals, I will offer suggestions for reorganization or redesign, with the end goal of increasing efficiency and productivity within the organization.

Structure provides the groundwork for pursuing an organization's planned goals. "It is a blueprint for expectations and exchanges among internal players (executives, managers, employees) and external constituencies (such as customers, competitors, regulators, and clients)" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 51-52). Thus, the structural frame, casts organizations as metaphorical factories or machines, emphasizing planning, roles, goals, strategies, policies, technology, and environment for top performance. In the end, the right combination of these components is essential to organizational performance. However, if the structure of an organization is overlooked, energy and resources are often misdirected or wasted. Therefore, organizations need to consider and routinely manage their structure. In all, the structural frame offers six overarching assumptions, which outline how the structure of an organization enhances instead of constraining what an organization can do (Table 1). I use these assumptions when analyzing findings and discussing ways in which this program can strengthen its partnership.

Table 1

Assumptions of the Structural Frame

1. Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives and devise strategies to reach those goals.

2. Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor.
3. Suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh.
4. Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures.
5. Effective structure fits an organization's current circumstances (including its strategy, technology, workforce, and environment).
6. When performance suffers from structural flaws, the remedy is problem solving and restructuring.

Note: Adapted from Bolman & Deal, 2017, pg. 48)

Of Bolman and Deal's four frames, educational researchers have found that the most prominent frames used by leaders in educational settings were the human development and structural frames (Sypawka, 2008). However, Pourrajab & Ghani (2016), found that principals who led through a structural frame met their organizational goals through control. Structural leaders were able to allocate work according to employee responsibilities. Additionally, in the context of enrollment management administrators, Black (2004) argued that the structural frame can help organizations analyze policies and processes. The focus on the structural frame has allowed for "reengineering processes like the campus visit, orientation, advising, or registration to ensure student success and satisfaction" (Black, 2004, p. 5). By redesigning and reevaluating policies, colleges and universities can weed out "bad policies, simplify them

when possible, communicate them effectively, and educate students regarding their

responsibilities and related consequences" (Black, 2004, p. 4-5).

By directing attention to the structural frame, this study seeks to offer practical,

implementable, and transferrable implications for colleges that enter into correctional

education partnerships. This will be similar to work by Elmeski (2012) and Bernato

(2018) who applied all four frames of Bolman and Deal's framework to maximize the

effectiveness of a partnership between parents and a school. This case study will take into

account the assumptions laid out by Bolman & Deal (2017) to analyze the current

structure of the correctional education organization and offer suggestions for how the

organization as a whole can reframe for optimal performance outcomes. In this sense, I

will analyze the interviews and document data in terms of how the structure of the

organization is establishing goals, implementing strategies to meet those goals, creating

coordination and control, working together, problem-solving, and modifying to serve its

current circumstances.

Research Methods

This single-case study sought to understand how a partnership between a

community college and a sheriff's department is structured to offer educational

opportunities that build entry-level workforce skills. The data collection and analysis of

this study drew on the approach of an intrinsic case study (Stake, 2008; Yin, 2009). An

intrinsic case study is used when the researcher is seeking to better understand one

particular case of interest and does not aim to generalize the findings (Stake, 2008).

Therefore, I formed a rich understanding of the partnership through interviews and

document analysis. I aimed to confirm the validity of the research process through the

triangulation of multiple sources of data (Yin, 1984). In the end, since the overall purpose of this study was to better understand a case between one community college and sheriff's department partnership, the qualitative approach allowed for a comprehensive look into the relationship and allowed me to address my research questions in-depth.

Researcher Positionality

As a cis-gendered, White, woman, I need to acknowledge my privilege in researching and writing about the incarcerated population. In the United States, the system of mass incarceration disproportionally affects lower-income communities and communities of color. In the absence of direct participation and familiarity with what it is like to have been incarcerated or have family members that are/have been incarcerated, I bring my experience as an educator. As a former teacher in a historically underserved community, I have seen the detrimental impact that incarceration has on individuals and their families. In doing this research, I hope to highlight the critical need for correctional education programs to equitably offer educational opportunities that lead to employment or enrollment in post-secondary education post-release. Ultimately, my goal is to use my voice to bring awareness to the moral and ethical duty that the United States has to equitably educate all of its citizens, regardless of social standing.

Program Overview

The site of this case study was an exemplary correctional education partnership between a community college and a sheriff's department. This correctional education program offers adult education in the form of non-college credit courses. These continuing education units (CEU) courses offered are part of the community colleges continuing education program and include both vocational (e.g., Plumbing) and academic

(e.g. English as a Second Language) subjects. Students who take part in a course are awarded certificates of completion at the end of each course (see Table 2). Importantly, there is no limit on the number of classes that a student can take a day, and there are no exclusionary measures taken in terms of previous educational attainment for students to enroll.

The sheriff's department, which is located in a large metropolitan city in the southern U.S., oversees operations at the local jail. In this partnership, a memorandum of understanding outlines the roles and responsibilities of each organization. The sheriff's department is responsible for providing classroom space, educating deputies to provide security for the program, recruiting students, and supplementing educational supplies and equipment. In return, community college promises to employ qualified staff (between 20-30 faculty), provides curriculum, assist students with obtaining employment upon release, offer courses that can be built upon on-campus post-release, provide students with a certificate upon course completion, and conduct classes in compliance with college, state, and federal guidelines.

Moreover, this site is a long-standing partnership, that was established in the 1970s. Significantly, in 2004, this site became the first jail program in the nation to be certified by the Correctional Education Association (CEA). The CEA performs regular audits to ensure that programs meet their rigorous standards for educational programming offered to incarcerated students. In 2018, this correctional education program enrolled over 6,000 students (students counted for each class taken) and offered over 1,000 courses that last anywhere from one to eight weeks. These various course lengths take into account that the average length of stay in jail is 25 days (Zeng, 2018).

Table 2

Course Offerings May 2019

Subject
Automotive
Welding
Autobody Repair
Computer
Culinary Arts
Woodwork
Building Maintenance
Tailoring and Alterations
Business Technology
Graphic Arts
Workplace Literacy
Behavior Modification
Basics of Inventory Management
Construction Site Safety and Health

Participants

In this case study, a gatekeeper from the community college offered contact information for potential participants and permitted recruiting these individuals for the study (Gaikwad, 2017). These individuals were then emailed the study protocol and consent form. The four participants included in this study were chosen based on

purposeful sampling techniques, which involves seeking out and selecting individuals or groups that are particularly knowledgeable or experienced in the phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Thus, the four participants are those that have expert knowledge of the program structure. These individuals are part of the administrative body that holds decision-making power for the program; three of them work for the community college and one for the sheriff's department.

Due to the high chance of identifiability, participant's job titles and their organizational affiliation will be kept confidential. All names used in this study are pseudonyms (See Table 3). Participation in this study was voluntary, each participant signed a consent form, and participants were informed that identifying information would be removed from interview responses to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, this study had full approval from the [author's university blinded for review] institutional review board, and the participating community college's institutional review board.

Table 3

Participant Information

Participant Pseudonym	Participant Affiliation
Abby	Sheriff's Department Administrator
Dustin	Community College Administrator
John	Community College Administrator
Rachel	Community College Administrator

Data Collection and Analysis

Data in this study consisted of interview transcripts and pertinent documents, with permission to conduct interviews and review administrative documents authorized by the gatekeeper at the community college (Gaikwad, 2017). In terms of interview data, each of the participants was asked to partake in a 60 to 90-minute semi-structured interview, which allowed for flexibility in the interview process. Each of the interview participants was interviewed in-person at their place of work. All participants were asked the same six-core interview questions; additional questions were asked based on participant responses. Overall, questions focused on program structure, decision-making responsibilities, courses and curriculum, and choices made based on the labor market (see Appendix B). These types of questions tied directly to how the organization structures itself to prepare students for employment post-release by teaching marketable skills. Interviews were taped using a hand-held recorder and following the meeting were transcribed verbatim. Documents for this study include employee handbooks, yearly budgets and cost breakdowns, course syllabi, a memorandum of understanding, a program audit, as well as other administrative documents (See Appendix A).

Interview and document analysis followed the methods of thematic analysis, which identifies, analyzes, organizes, describes, and reports themes found within a data set (Braun & Clark, 2012). In the first phase, I familiarized myself with the data by listening to interview audio and reading the administrative documents and interview transcripts multiple times. In the second phase of analysis, I assigned the first round of codes using descriptive codes (Miles et al., 2020). On a hard copy of the transcripts, descriptive coding allowed me to assign a word or short phrase to the meaning of a passage. Next, I began generating themes by clustering codes that shared meaning.

Finally, I reviewed my generated themes and assigned them names and definitions. In my findings section, I present the final themes and provide multiple examples for each.

Trustworthiness

As Erickson (1986) postulates, what is learned in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations. This can be achieved through what Geerz (1983) calls a thick description. By providing detailed information on the site, participants, and research methods, the study findings intend to be transferable to a similar partnership. Additionally, the evidence provided is strengthened by triangulating interviews and document data. Thus, by analyzing multiple sources of data, I create a clear image of the findings. In the end, this case study seeks to advance debate and to enrich understanding of community college and sheriff's department partnerships in correctional education.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to better understand how a partnership between a community college and sheriff's department is structured to offer educational opportunities that build entry-level workforce skills. As a result of thematic analysis, two themes were generated from the data: (a) *Importance of structurally embedding the mission* highlights how the program's structure aids or hinders its ability to reach program goals. Under this theme, I also include the sub-theme: *embedding employability within program structure* which outlines strategies the program employs to ensure student employability post-release. Together, this theme and subtheme align with the structural frame assumptions that: organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives and devise strategies to reach those goals; organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor. (b) *How the*

structure fits the partnership's current circumstances highlights how program outcomes are being impacted by its structure. Under this overarching theme, there are three subthemes that further detail issues about the structure of the program. They are *access to technology, course offerings to females,* and *tracking students post-release*. In regards to the structural frame, the second theme and its sub-themes emphasize an organization's need to: build an effective structure that fits an organization's current circumstances (including its strategy, technology, workforce, and environment) and restructure when performance suffers from structural flaws.

Theme One: Structurally Embedded Mission

When describing the program's mission and goals, college and correctional administrators articulated the program's dedication to aligning courses with the skills and knowledge students' would need to find employment post-release. As Lynn stated, "[the goal is to] provide solid training initiatives that will prevent the offenders from re-offending and hopefully that they become gainfully employed with those skills." Daniel reiterated this sentiment by saying "I think the main goal is to give these kids some type of skills, some type of training so that they can become productive citizens once they get out." This was further solidified in the Pre-Service Handbook given to all new program hires (Document E). The philosophy of the program states the following: "The programs are structured to provide the offenders with entry-level skills to enter into the workforce or a vocation. Vocational and workforce training is seen as a bridge for offenders to become productive members of society." Furthermore, one of their program goals is to provide "structured learning to develop marketable skills for the workforce." Overall, administrators from both sides of the partnership and documents seem to agree on the

mission and goals of the program. Thus, we might assume that the program is meeting the first structural frame assumption that organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives and devise strategies to reach those goals.

Another way that the program is structured to ensure students gain workforce skills is by offering an identical curriculum provided to traditional community college students. The intentionality of the curriculum can be seen in the course syllabus given to students. For example, if a student was taking "Introduction to Automotive Technology" while incarcerated, their course syllabus would mirror a course offered at the community college. Importantly, these courses are non-credit and are part of the Continuing Education program at the community college, which offers certificates as proof of course completion in-lieu of credit. Nonetheless, the syllabus provides an identical course description, learning outcomes, and learner objectives as students taking this course on the main campus (Document A). Bruno explained that these courses may be given in shorter periods, but are essentially the same:

> [Incarcerated students will] take Welding 101. Well, Welding 101 is a mirrored course for Welding 101 on the credit side. Same objective, just one is taught in the traditional 15 week semester credit hour, 96 clock hours, versus the continued education route, which may take place in a month.

He went on to explain that one of the main reasons for the link between continuing education and the college-credit courses is so students will enroll at the community college post-release:

> Let's say the student was in corrections and they took three welding CEU [continuing education unit] courses. Well, those three CEU courses are already

embedded in the five, level-one certificate, credit program courses. They've taken the three CEU courses, right? They are automatically given the credit for nine hours towards a 15-hour semester credit-hour certificate. They can take that certificate, they can continue with the CE [continuing education] certificate, or they can jump into credit.

Lynn echoed the pathway between the program and enrolling in college:

We try to encourage our students when they leave here to transfer to the community college. When they enroll in the program here they are enrolling as students of [community college]. Every certificate that they get or certification they get is coming from [community college].

Again, by creating policies to align correctional curriculum with that of the traditional college, it would seem that the partnership meets the first assumption of the structural frame: Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives and devise strategies to reach those goals. At the same time, the community college administrators are hoping that these students enroll in a degree program post-release. Therefore, they may be more interested in a pathway to degree completion rather than the program's stated outcome of building entry-level workforce skills. Additionally, we must remember that the purpose of these two institutions is vastly different (Thouin, 2021). Therefore, while these two organizations are working towards a similar goal, they are going to go about this in different ways. In the end, this assumption may be easier to prove within a single organization rather than a partnership.

Sub-theme One: Embedding Employability within Program Structure

Additionally, the program embeds the goals of skill-building and post-release employability into the structure of the partnership. One of the ways it does this is by correctional staff who screen students before they enroll in a class. Lynn described the process that education deputies take to ensure the safety of staff and students:

> [Education deputies] will go in and look at their caution tags. They will look at their charges and to the term of whether or not they would be suited to put into a class. For instance, if we have somebody who is a rapist, we will not put them in a female [instructed] class.

The purpose of this is to both ensure the safety of staff and students, but also to place students in courses that they could gain employment in, even with a criminal record. This particular action speaks to the second assumption of the structural frame: Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor. By giving this responsibility to the correctional staff, the program ensures that students will only take courses that are aligned with jobs they can obtain with a criminal history.

When deciding the course offerings, Daniel, a college administrator, explained that "number one, these classes are kind of like, I should say best practices, where somebody that's been convicted of a felony or something, the classes that we teach [are those] that they could easily find employment in."

Additionally, the memorandum of understanding (MOU), signed by the partnering organizations, clearly outlines the responsibility that the community college has in ensuring student employability and pathway to post-secondary education (Document G). The MOU states that the community college will:

Provide workforce education course manual (WECM) courses for students that

will articulate with on-campus courses and programs so that students may work

toward [community college] marketable skills and level one certificates and

associates degrees assist the students through instructional staff and the

[community college] job placement services in obtaining employment upon their

release.

Thus, by diving labor and giving the community college the responsibility of providing

skills and assistance for employability into the MOU, the program meets the third

structural frame assumption.

Theme Two: Structure and the Current Circumstances

One of the ways that the structure of the program meets its current circumstances

is by developing and nurturing instructor-student relationships. Each participant was able

to recall a time when a former student reached out to administrators to voice their

gratitude for the program. Daniel shared two special moments when he ran into former

students in public:

After running tens of thousands of students through, I see them on the outside.

They recognize me before I recognize them. And most that I've met they would

say, "Well thank you. I know that you're the guy from the jail program there", and

then I see what they're doing. And they usually tell me, "If it wasn't for that when

I was in jail, I wouldn't be here."

One couple that I ran into at the rodeo, was with my family and he was

with his family. And then he'd kind of flagged me down there. There were just

two little children in the stroller and the wife and I think, and he just came up to

me, "Thank you, man. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. That changed, that whole experience down there, changed my whole life in terms of being in the class system."

For Lynn, the emails writing back to the program post-release reassure her of the program's effectiveness: "We have letters that inmates write back and say, I'm doing this and thank you for helping me." Additionally, some staff members take it upon themselves to help students obtain employment. Lynn recalled a time when an instructor connected a student with an employment opportunity. "In our HVAC class, the instructor knew a guy who owned a business and he recommended his student and then the guy hired him." These interactions, emails, and memories show that administrators and program staff are mutually committed to student outcomes and the overall well-being of students post-release. This may be proof that the partnership meets the fifth assumption (Effective structure fits an organization's current circumstances) by fostering an environment that students feel they can reach out to post-release. This also provides evidence to why the first assumption (Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives and devise strategies to reach those goals.) is so important; there are services that the community college can more easily provide than the sheriff's department would have difficulty doing, and vice versa.

Sub-theme One: Access to Technology

The successes of the program are acknowledged by the Correctional Education Association in their latest audit report (Document H). In the auditor's comments to the commission, it was noted that "this program staff shows ongoing dedication to provide new, relevant programming to meet the needs of even more segments of the population",

and that the program directors and jail staff have worked to "provide many successful programs in the environment of large numbers, high population turnover, and ever-present inmate movement and security mandates." As you'll find below, the auditor's statements are inconsistent with some of my findings. In particular, the program's minimal use of technology, course offerings for women, and lack of program assessment.

Notably, program structure can also impede positive outcomes for students. For this program, in particular, structure impedes students' access to new and relevant technology. Calyn mentioned that "one of the felon-friendly hiring industries is the IT industry." She went on to say, "There are certain things like if you have been convicted of identity theft or fraud or something like that, that may preclude you from cybersecurity, but it wouldn't preclude you from coding, computer programming, things of that nature." Lynn confirmed that "Technology is crucial. We do have computer literacy classes now because it's where we're going. [The world is] very little paper and pencil. [Students] will have to have some familiarity with the computer otherwise they're not going to be able to function. Even applying for jobs." Additionally, she mentioned that the program was looking to expand student access to job application platforms via computers: "We are looking at getting a kiosk where they can apply for jobs and they just go in, sit down, they can look at jobs on there, and fill them out."

These types of programs are currently non-internet-based. Lynn explained that "It is like a closed-circuit type program and the jobs are uploaded, but the inmates do not have the capability of getting on the internet. The internet is not allowed in the jail." A note of the program's intention of expanding access to computers for students, an email between program administrators and the sheriff's department requested approval for a set

of laptop computers and a locking/charging station. It was specified that these laptops would "not be internet-based, but will offer downloaded instructional resources that will facilitate the learning for the students" (Document C).

The program has had some pushback from the sheriff's department in terms of being able to offer all components of computer-based courses. She explained:

> Technology a lot of times is based on who runs the jail. And in our case, the sheriff runs the jail. And so that's why we're working with the CEA to try to come up with a plan that we can present to him and say, "Okay, these are the pitfalls. This is what's worked, this is what hasn't worked." And we're looking at different people across the country that have done technology.

This pushback is evidence that this partnership is not currently meeting the fourth structural frame assumption: Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures. According to the participants, personal agendas are currently prevailing over what is best for the students and program goals. This also calls into question if the program is meeting the first assumption (Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives and devise strategies to reach those goals). Nonetheless, the program administrators are dedicated to working around the obstacles of the correctional setting to offer students skills in careers that they could gain employment in even with a criminal record. Notably, structural decisions are often complicated by the rules and regulations set by the sheriff's department. In the end, the performance of the program is suffering from structural flaws, and this partnership should look to problem solve and restructure (assumption one and six) accordingly.

Sub-theme Two: Course offerings for Females

In addition to expanding technological access, Calyn noted that "there's some room for improvement" when it comes to equal class offerings for male and female students. She went on to explain how the correctional setting can be restrictive when it comes to offering equal courses for women:

> You don't have as much space because there are classrooms for men on more than one floor as opposed to classrooms for women. And so because you can't mix the men and the women, you can't mix them in the classroom, there's limited classroom space, and the available classroom space is not just for us. It's also AA, and they use it, the church uses it. And then you have the programs, like the GED programs and things of that nature that use it too.

Lynn expanded on this idea:

> We offer more classes to the males than we do to the females. One of the biggest reasons is space. We do not have the classroom space on a female floor to offer any more classes than what we offer. We offer [classes such as] tailoring, business technology, and workplace literacy to females currently.

In addition to space, the sheriff's department has the authority when it comes to expanding educational opportunities for females. Lynn confirmed that the current sheriff has the best interest of the students in mind:

> This is the right season to do that because the right people [are] in place who have the full thought by the vision to say, "Yes, we can do this." Whereas in previous years it was like, "Absolutely not. No, we're not doing that. It's just going to be too much [of a] problem, duh, duh, duh." The climate is very, very good for that [now].

Bruno confirmed that:

> This year there has been a concerted effort to engage women in nontraditional
>
> careers, welding, automotive, culinary, and I'm trying to do some more research
>
> to find out what's going on across the country in terms of what programming is
>
> geared for women.

Therefore, correctional education administrators seem to be making efforts to expand

course offerings for incarcerated women. However, this program is not currently meeting

the sixth assumption of the structural frame: When performance suffers from structural

flaws, the remedy is problem solving and restructuring. Structural factors such as space

and opposing viewpoints from the sheriff's department's staff are hindering program

performance, but there has been no attempt to come together and restructure. In an email

between program administrators and the sheriff's department, administrators expressed

the need to include incarcerated females in more vocational classes. The email suggested

to, "transport the females at the same time as the males on separate buses", and that the

"selected classes would be all-female, not co-ed." The email suggested that the first two

courses added should be Culinary Arts and Auto Body. In sum, the administrators make

concerted efforts to create a program that teaches marketable skills, but it also needs to

recognize when it is time to restructure. This finding builds upon conclusions of Thouin

(2021), and asks whether an equal partnership is possible if one party has more power

and dictates decisions are space, students, transportation, and instructional materials.

Sub-theme Three: Tracking Students Post-Release

Finally, the structure of this program impacts its ability to assess student

outcomes post-release. Currently, once a student leaves the jail, there is no direct way to

contact them or know if they have gained employment. The only way that students are accounted for is if they 1) re-offend, 2) email or send a letter back to the program with updates or 3) enroll at the community college directly. Hence, the program cannot know the true effectiveness of its courses. Lynn detailed the current process as:

> Once the offenders leave, they do not and will not have anything to do with officers [or] anybody that has anything to do with Sheriff's department, because they feel like you're trying to track them to see where they are. Or, you trying to put them in a situation where they would get arrested again so they don't trust any of us, so to speak, unless they have developed a personal relationship with us, so we can get that feedback from them. When they leave it's all like, "I don't want to have anything to do with you".

Daniel confirmed that due to the current lack of tracking, the program is in the dark about their effects on recidivism:

> Recidivism studies and things of that nature are usually done, at a state or county level. We have to try to track; we've got to try to track students. And that's not something that we necessarily do, but that's one of the things we're looking at doing as well because long-term-wise, he needs to know whether or not [our] programs are saving people off from going back to jail.

These pieces of evidence suggest that the program needs to create a strategy for evaluating the program in terms of its ability to prepare students for employment post-release. Additionally, though the accreditation report noted that the program was providing new, relevant programming to meet the needs of even more segments of the population, the program is currently unable to measure its performance. In the end, this

program does not have a clear way of evaluating their progress when it comes to student employability, pathways to college, or reducing recidivism. These are key pieces that should be built into the program structure. In the end, to meet the sixth assumption of the structural frame (When performance suffers from structural flaws, the remedy is problem-solving and restructuring), administrators need to come together and create comprehensive program assessment aside from the CEA audit. This could include but should not be limited to exploring the experiences of teachers in their program and the positive student outcomes (e.g., employment, recidivism) of participating in this program.

Limitations

The most salient limitation of this case study is the small number of participants. However, in this particular case, the individuals interviewed make up the entirety of the administrative body that holds expert knowledge of this partnership. Additionally, this study aims to generalize within rather than from the case. In the end, though the findings may not be generalizable on a large scale, the ultimate goal is for the findings to be transferrable to similar community college and sheriff's department partnerships.

Discussion

In December 2020, Congress voted to lift the ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals (Green, 2020). Now, colleges and universities will be able to secure federal dollars to fund these types of programs. Therefore, there is an immediate need to better understand how these correctional education programs are structured to offer students education that sets them up to successfully rejoin society post-release. This study is both timely and important in better understanding how correctional education programs can function optimally and offer students high-quality programming.

In an attempt to answer how the structure of correctional education programs can support student employment post-release, this study asked: (1) *How is a partnership between a community college and sheriff's department structured to provide educational opportunities that develop marketable skills for the workforce?* (2) *Which structures within this partnership benefit or impede the development of students' marketable skills?* Through thematic analysis of interviews and document data, two themes were developed: (a) *Importance of structurally embedding the mission,* which highlights how the program's structure aids or hinders its ability to reach program goals. (b) *How the structure fits the partnership's current circumstances* highlights how program outcomes are being impacted by its structure. In the remainder of this paper, I will discuss findings as they pertain to the research questions, the Structural Frame (Bolman & Deal, 2017), the contributions that this paper makes to the current literature, and the implications this study offers for future research.

Connection Between Findings and Research Questions

1. *How is a partnership between a community college and sheriff's department structured to provide educational opportunities that develop marketable skills for the workforce?*

This program emphasizes its mission to provide courses that build marketable skills in multiple program documents, essentially building them into the program structure. In the MOU (Document G), the organizations agreed that the community college would offer classes that built marketable skills and aligned with courses on the main community college campus. Additionally, the MOU makes it the community college's responsibility to help students with job placement services so that they can gain employment post-

release (Document G). In other documents, such as the new-hire handbook (Document E), the program reiterates its commitment to student outcomes through its mission and goals. These statements directly reflect the program's efforts to build marketable skills for students to rejoin society successfully.

Furthermore, to offer students the greatest chances of being employed, they screen students based on prior criminal records, before assigning them to classes. This process is laid out in the screening and eligibility handbook given to education deputies that work directly for the sheriff's department (Document F). Participants mentioned that the eligibility requirements serve two purposes; keep students and faculty safe, and ensure students are taking classes that coordinate with professions they could gain employment in with a criminal history.

In addition to screening students, the program aligns its curriculum with that of the community college. The syllabus including course descriptions, learning outcomes, and course objectives, mirror those that are offered on the main campus. In doing so, the program offers students a non-credit bearing certificate at the end of each course. These certificates can be transferred in for credit at the community college, can be applied towards a continuing education workforce certificate, or taken as-is to an employer as proof of course completion. Based on this data, there is proof to support that the structure of the program is geared towards building marketable skills for students. Additionally, the program takes steps, through course eligibility and aligned curriculum, to ensure that students are set-up for employment post-release.

2. *Which structures within this partnership benefit or impede the development of students' marketable skills?*

However, the findings also highlight that program partners do not always do what they say they will do. Specifically, the structure of the partnership creates obstacles and impedes its ability to build marketable skills for all students. One of these is technology. Administrators mentioned that the jurisdiction of the sheriff's department prohibits them from expanding technology-based platforms and courses to students. Based on the previous leadership at the sheriff's department, the program has been limited in its access to technology, especially access to the internet. Additionally, the sheriff's department dictates the busing of students, the allocation of classrooms, and the strict separation of male and female students. All of these restrict the course offerings for women. Thus, while the program claims to offer courses that equip students for employment post-release, the courses offered are limited to those that can be completed without access to technology. Equally important to note, the current courses offered to women are outdated or inexistent. In the end, though program administrators have voiced their concerns and requests via emails to the sheriff's department, and are making strives to expand access to technology and course offerings for female students, these decisions should be written in an updated MOU.

Lastly, the findings mention the need for an organized effort for tracking students' post-release. Currently, the program *does* account for the number of students that enroll in their courses, the number of students that complete their courses, and the total number of certificates they award per course. However, the program *does not* have a system for measuring their impact on recidivism. Additionally, they are unaware of how many students leave their program and gain employment. In terms of students who have been released from the jurisdiction of the sheriff's department, the only current method of

evaluating the effects of the program is with the number of students that complete a certificate while incarcerated and then proceed to enroll at the community college post-release. Thus, as it stands, they cannot determinately say that their program is an effective means for building marketable skills, reducing recidivism, nor impacting employment outcomes.

Contributions to Prior Literature

These findings situate themselves within several current topics on building successful partnerships between community colleges and sheriff's departments. Firstly, this paper reiterates the need for an agreed-upon MOU. Corrections to College California (2018) suggests that an MOU "establishes the operational framework for your partnership and identifies both parties' roles and responsibilities" (p. 4). With this document, the organization lays out the specified duties that should be taken care of by the sheriff's department and which are the responsibility of the community college. Secondly, this paper highlights that as the labor market shifts and employers demand higher education degrees for employment, correctional education programs must make technology available to students on a larger scale. Walsh & Delaney (2020) suggest that programs should provide education that is of "the same caliber as that at community campuses and will facilitate success for students continuing their education when they return home" (p. 6). Importantly, by 2027, 70% of all jobs in the economy will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school (Blumenstyk, 2020). Importantly, in 2010, computer skills were required at medium to high levels of proficiency for 62% of all jobs. (Carnevale et al., 2013). Therefore, it is imperative that this organization expands its

access to technology and increases its course offerings in subjects that require skills in this area.

Thirdly, as the program stands, it widely ignores the occupational needs of its female population. In recent years, the incarceration rate for women has grown at twice the pace of men's incarceration and has disproportionately been located in local jails (Kajstura, 2019). Additionally, Black and American Indian women are disproportionately incarcerated (Kajstura, 2019). Unfortunately, as the incarcerated female population grows, few post-release programs are available to women and girls (Kajstura, 2019). Walsh & Delaney (2020) suggest that programs ensure equitable access. This means embedding gender and racial equity as well as accessibility into the program design. Thus, to offer equitable educational opportunities, this program must make strides in expanding program access to their female population.

Lastly, the current structure does not allow for any definitive measure of program effectiveness. Current literature informs us that both academic and vocational programs may be equally effective at preparing inmates for the labor market following release (Davis et al., 2013, p. 46). However, the majority of studies use recidivism as the only outcome measure of program effectiveness. Davis et al. (2013) argue that this is problematic and that more studies should look to measure skills, abilities, and employment gained from participating in a correctional education program. Walsh & Delaney (2020) reiterate that programs must "begin collecting enrollment, demographic, and completion data from the start of the program to support data-driven implementation strategies and identify areas for improvement" (p. 7). One of the ways program administrators could do that is by sending out surveys to their former students. This and

other evaluation methods are needed to better estimate the effect this program has on building marketable skills.

Ties to the Conceptual Framework

In addition to the literature, this study draws on the conceptual framework presented in the book, *Reframing Organizations*, in which four frames are introduced for organizations to evaluate and strengthen themselves (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The Structural Frame, described as an animal skeleton or buildings framework, can both enhance and constrain the performance of an organization. As previously stated, this paper aims to offer suggestions for how the organization can structurally reframe itself in terms of how they establish goals, implement strategies to meet those goals, create coordination and control, work together, problem-solve, and modify to serve its current circumstances.

Two of the tenants central to the Structural Frame are: "how to allocate work and how to coordinate diverse efforts after parceling out responsibilities" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 53). Due in large part to the MOU, this organization does an exemplary job at allocating work. Their successful division of labor is a keystone of the organization's structure and has contributed to their ability to sustain a long-running partnership between the community college and sheriff's department. However, they have some difficulty coordinating their efforts once these responsibilities are laid out. This is most obvious when it comes to implementing new courses and expanding access to technology. With each partner having a different role in the organization, they have created a lengthy and bureaucratic method of getting new ideas and programs approved.

In this sense, the organization should look to reframe its structure in terms of how it modifies to serve its current situation and how it coordinates work.

Another component of the Structural Frame is the determination of the long-range goals and objectives of an enterprise. Along with these goals, an organization should adopt courses of action and allocate resources necessary for carrying out its goals (Chandler, 1962). Currently, the program clearly defines its goals in the administrative documents and interviews collected. As an organization, they are dedicated to offering students marketable skills that can help them gain employment and rejoin society once released. For this organization to accomplish its goals long-term, it must create a structure that allows them to evaluate their performance in terms of increasing student employability, building skills, and reducing recidivism. Additionally, the sheriff's department must allocate the necessary funds, space, and resources to offer classes that incorporate technology and vocational courses for women.

Per the framework, this organization should look to restructure to increase efficiency and performance. During the process of restructuring, the organization should focus on reevaluating the roles and division of labor set out by the MOU. The current MOU restricts the community college's ability to expand the vocational courses offered to women and limits the community college's need to expand access to technology, by leaving this role and responsibility to the sheriff's department. Additionally, to optimize performance, the correctional education program should redesign its current method of evaluating the program's effectiveness. Currently, the program's structure cannot track students post-release and offers no real method of determining the program's success in terms of offering courses aligned with preparing students for employment. The

administrators are well-intentioned, but they rely on anecdotal rather than systematic empirical data to evaluate how well correctional education offerings prepare students for reentry. By making these necessary changes, the organization can reframe its structure to benefit both administrators and students.

Contributions and Implications

In this paper, the structure of a partnership between a community college and sheriff's department is analyzed to better understand how a correctional education program builds marketable skills and ensures students can find employment post-release. Therefore, this study contributes to a growing conversation on the structure of correctional education programs. The findings suggest that similar correctional education programs should: jointly write and update an MOU as needed, expand access to technology, offer equal course options for male and female inmates, and create a system for evaluating their effectiveness in terms of student employability. Thus, partnerships between community colleges and sheriff's departments can look to this study for guidance on how to structure their organization.

The current study calls attention to the need for further research in the field of correctional education. Firstly, as the rate of female incarceration increases, it is critical to study the needs of this population. Researchers should look to study how programs are meeting the occupational, educational, and skill needs of incarcerated females. Furthermore, policymakers need to address the growing inequality in release programs for females in correctional settings. Secondly, there is a gap in the current literature when it comes to the effectiveness of vocational programs to increase the chances of employment and develop marketable skills. In the future, researchers should aim to

measure these outcomes along with recidivism. Lastly, there is little known about the teaching experience in these settings. Research is needed to better understand the experiences of these professionals and how they implement correctional education programs.

Conclusion

In an economy that increasingly values post-secondary education, the inequality between incarcerated individuals and the general population is growing, particularly for marginalized communities. Expanding and improving correctional education opportunities are steps the United States can take to bridging the educational, wealth, and employment gaps between these two. In the end, only with a concerted effort to educate all Americans can we create an educated workforce and offer citizens a meaningful way to contribute to society.

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Appendix A

Description of Documents Analyzed

Document Title	Document Description
Document A	A course syllabus for 'Introduction to Automotive Technology'. Provides students with a description of the course, course student learning outcomes, learner objectives, course prerequisites, and instructional methods
Document B	A monthly update to the sheriff's office that includes enrollment data, number of classes offered, and unenrolled or released student numbers.
Document C	An email sent to the sheriff's office requesting approval for a set of laptop computers and a locking/charging station.
Document D	An email sent to the sheriff's office detailing a plan to expand course offerings for female students.
Document E	A Pre-Service handbook is given to all new hires of the program. Includes history, mission and goals, sexual

	harassment policy, and security measures for the program.
Document F	A recruiting and screening handbook that is given to education deputies that outlines the general eligibility requirements for students.
Document G	A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the sheriff's department and community college. This document outlines the roles and responsibilities of each institution as it pertains to the partnership.
Document H	An audit report from July 2017 completed by the Correctional Education Association.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the administrative and programmatic structure of the current program?

2. Can you describe evaluation practices of the adult education program or courses within the program?

    c) How does the program meet projected occupational needs of its students?

    d) How does the program accommodate for the needs of diverse students?

3. Can you describe the ways in which your institution assess' instructional quality of instructors?

    b) How does the assessment of teaching compare to other instructional settings?

4. Tell me about assessment of student learning in the program.

    c) Can you describe the day to day assessment of learning given to students?

    d) Can you describe how assessment is tailored for specific student needs?

5. Can you describe some of the challenges that your institution continues to face regarding the program structure for the adult education program?

    b) What suggestions would you give to improve these?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss?

Chapter VI – Research Paper Three

Experiences and Perceptions of Program Effectiveness by Instructors in

Correctional Settings: A Community College Case Study

Historians note the presence of correctional education as far back as 1834 when

tutors from Harvard Divinity College worked with individuals in Massachusetts State

Prison (BPDS, 1972). Since then, the growth and decline of correctional education

programs have largely been dictated by the availability of federal funding. Thus, the

demise of postsecondary correctional education programs is often associated with an

increase in conservative, anti-correctional education ideologies in the U.S. Congress

(Gehring, 1997). This was most critically seen in 1994 when as part of "tough-on-crime"

policies, congress adopted a bill that banned people in prison from accessing federal Pell

Grants. This decision left incarcerated students without a reliable or consistent source of

funding for post-secondary education; a population that is overwhelmingly poor and

likely to not have had access to quality education prior to incarceration (Western & Petit,

2010). Consequently, the number of correctional education programs throughout the

United States dropped; Bureau of Justice Statistics data showed that 59% of states offered

college programs in prison in 1990; compared to only 36% in 2005. (Turner, 2018).

In 2015, a shift in policies in favor of post-secondary education for justice-

involved individuals began with the introduction of the Second Chance Pell Program.

With this, 64 colleges and universities were offered federal funding through the Pell

Grant program for post-secondary education in prisons (Martinez-Hill, 2021). This

program was later expanded to 130 schools by former U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy

DeVos in 2020 (Department of Education, 2020). Then, in December 2020, after 26

years, the ban on Pell Grants was lifted with the signing of the FAFSA Simplification Act

(Martinez-Hill, 2021). This decision is set to take effect in July 2023, unless the U.S.

Secretary of Education implements the changes sooner. Now, with approximately half a

million incarcerated individuals eligible for federal funding (Oakford et al., 2019),

attention shifts to ensuring programs are offering high-quality and equitable education.

There is a worry that programs will emerge that seek to exploit students to make

additional revenue, rather than caring about providing educational opportunities to these

individuals (Burke, 2021). This is especially important to consider as the U.S. continues

to disproportionately incarcerated Black and Hispanic populations (Nellis, 2016).

In 2020, there were approximately 1.8 million individuals in state and federal

prisons and local jails[2] (Kang-Brown et al., 2021). With 95% of these individuals set to

be released back into society one day (James, 2015), there is a critical need to understand

how to ensure the quality and effectiveness of correctional education programs so that

individuals can reenter and contribute positively to their communities. To date, research

has largely focused on educating to reduce recidivism (Aos et al., 2006; Davis et al.,

2013; Mackenzie, 2006; Wilson et al., 2000). In the RAND corporation's meta-analysis

of previous recidivism studies, Davis et al. (2013) found that participating in any type of

correctional education would reduce the chances of recidivism by 43%. Others have

noted that participation in correctional education can increase the chances of employment

post-release (Davis et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2000). In a recent analysis by the Vera

Institute of Justice, Oakford et al. (2019) found that correctional education can increase

the employment rate for formerly incarcerated individuals by 10%. Additionally, by

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[2] This is down 14% from 2019, largely due to COVID-19 (Kang-Brown et al., 2021).

reducing recidivism, states can save a combined $365.8 million per year on incarceration costs (Oakford et al., 2019).

In recent years, using recidivism alone as a measure of effectiveness has come under scrutiny, for good reason. As Butts & Schiraldi (2018) explain, recidivism alone can mislead policymakers and the public when it compares dissimilar populations (race, age, educational attainment). This measure also focuses on a negative outcome rather than a positive one. They argue that researchers should instead look at factors such as graduation rate, employment rate, or the number of individuals that are living independently (Butts & Schiraldi, 2018). Others suggest that research should focus on positive factors such as the development of personal skills (Pelletier & Evans, 2019), ownership or entrepreneurship (Anderson et al., 2020), and supporting desistance rather than preventing recidivism (Kazemian, 2005).

This article heeds the messages to move beyond recidivism (Butts & Schiraldi, 2018) and ensuring that quality of correctional education programs should come from practitioners in the field (Burke, 2021). Additionally, as community colleges are the majority provider of post-secondary education in correctional settings (Royer et al., 2018), it is critical to the field to better understand their experiences and perceptions of program effectiveness. Using interview data, this case study aimed to tap into the experiences of community college instructors that work in correctional settings and to better understand their perceptions of effective correctional education. The purpose of this paper was to better understand the experience of instructors in correctional settings and their perceptions of program effectiveness. This purpose was achieved by interviewing current instructors from a community college that partners with a sheriff's

department to offer non-credit bearing college courses to individuals in custody of the sheriff's department. The findings of this study bring attention to the critical role that instructors play in the lives of incarcerated individuals and can inform correctional education administrators, community college leaders, correctional staff, and policymakers on best practices for correctional education programs. This paper asked the following research questions:

(1) How do instructors describe their experience in correctional settings?

(2) How do instructors perceive effective education in correctional settings?

This study analyzed interview data using an adapted version of Creemers and Kyriakides (2012), Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness. This uniquely positioned the paper to provide recommendations for similar correctional education programs to improve effectiveness from the perspective of instructors working within the program.

Literature Review

The breadth of literature on the experiences of postsecondary correctional education instructors is limited. Therefore, the research below represents nearly all the available studies that focused on the experiences of these individuals. Additionally, most of the research available did not explore the experiences of community college faculty. These studies instead focused on the experiences of university faculty or correctional staff. Moreover, there was virtually no research conducted in the jail environment, as most studies explored instructors ' experiences in prison settings. The literature below

provides an overview of challenges experienced by instructors in correctional settings, motivations for teaching in correctional settings, and instructors' perceptions on program effectiveness.

Challenges of Teaching in Carceral Settings

A seminal study on college programs in prisons by Osberg & Fraley (1993) surveyed faculty on their perceptions of the equivalence of prison education to traditional education. They also explored what motivated instructors to work in this setting, and the challenges they experienced while on the job. They found that more than two-thirds of faculty members believed the rigor of their program to be equivalent to that of a traditional college program. Moreover, instructors were motivated by a variety of factors such as pay, the opportunity to rehabilitate inmates, gaining experience to obtain a more traditional teaching job, and delivering education to underrepresented groups. Lastly, instructors were challenged by the limited availability of teaching aids (e.g., library resources), limited faculty-student contact time, and the relationship between faculty and correctional staff.

These challenges were shortly thereafter reiterated by Tewksbury & Van Nostrand (1996) who interviewed 40 postsecondary correctional educators. In examining the situational and occupational stressors encountered, postsecondary correctional educators mentioned that there were repeated disruptions during class time, insufficient materials for students, and inadequate classroom space. These frustrations were echoed by Meyer & Fredericks (2010) who found that site coordinators and administrators reported that students had scarce options for quiet rooms to read, a lack of cooperation from correctional staff, and difficulty accessing information via the internet. Additionally, they

noted a lack of college readiness among students, and limited communication between faculty and students which made it difficult for students to ask questions about course materials.

Some of the most insightful research comes from those with personal experience teaching in correctional settings. McCarthy (2006) highlighted the challenges of teaching community college courses in the San Quentin Correctional Facility. These included begging correctional staff for books for students to use, navigating numerous security checkpoints before entering the education building, having minimal access to resources for research (internet access), frequent lockdowns, and students missing class for factors outside the instructors or students' control (e.g., transferring to another facility). Notably, she mentioned the opposition to education and correctional culture. Since the warden has the ultimate say, pedagogical and academic freedoms are limited. instructors are aware that they walk a fine line between what they can and cannot teach. Nonetheless, she concluded that the rewards for students and society make the limitations worth enduring. Van Gundy et al. (2013) echoed the concerns on tensions between educators and correctional staff. They argued that issues such as classroom interruptions by security, restricted materials, removal of students from class, and security clearances made it difficult to address student needs or accomplish educational goals.

More recently, work by Weaver et al., (2020) surveyed instructors working for Boston University (BU) Prison Education Program (PEP) which offers undergraduate degrees to students who are incarcerated at two Massachusetts state prisons. She noted that most instructors had a positive experience but were challenged by the inability to connect with students one-on-one, accessing supplies, ambiguous policies and procedures

on what materials were allowed and how to bring them into the facility, and canceled classes for a variety of reasons (weather, lockdown, security issues). In a similar study at Ball State University, Edwards-Willey & Chivers (2005) found that instructors reported a lack of library and technological resources in the prison setting. Additionally, they noted that they believed incarcerated students had equal academic ability to that of on-campus students. Incarcerated students, they reported, placed more effort into their courses than traditional college students. In the end, instructors s in correctional settings are asked to complete the same tasks are instructors in traditional settings, but they must accomplish these tasks under special constraints (Jurich et al., 2001).

Many instructors are unprepared for the conditions inside correctional facilities because teacher preparatory schools do not prepare them to handle the realities of teaching in prison. instructors must be flexible and creative to work around the heterogeneity of student abilities in the same class, random lockdowns or rollcalls, and the other requirements of carceral settings (Jurich et al., 2001). This can cause what Wright (2005) called *culture shock*. He argued that "novice prison teachers are bewildered, confused, and disoriented . . . as they experience the nuances of prison life" (p. 20). Kallman (2020) reiterated from her own experience of teaching community college courses in state prisons, that there is no training for instructors entering prison settings beyond a security-focused facility orientation.

Positive interactions with students play a key role in instructors' perceptions of effectiveness and job satisfaction. Garland & McCarty (2011) interviewed over 200 educational and vocational staff employed in the Federal Bureau of Prisons and found that efficacy with inmates had the strongest independent effect on the perceptions of the

quality of supervision and organizational operations. This work confirmed the importance of healthy relationships with students, as they are the focus of an instructor's workday. These findings added to previous research that found negative relationships with inmates result in job dissatisfaction among correctional staff (Hayeslip, 1982; Garland & McCarty, 2010; Lombardo, 1989).

Motivations & Perceived Effectiveness of Instructors

Even with the wide range of obstacles and little specialized training for instructors in carceral settings, researchers have found that correctional education instructors believe the education is equivalent to traditional settings (Barringer-Brown, 2015). In a study of 53 faculty members teaching in correctional facilities near Richmond, Virginia, Barringer-Brown (2015) argued that a "critical gauge to the effectiveness of correctional education programs is the degree in which it offers quality education similar to education acquired from traditional colleges (p. 48). She found that a large percentage of faculty felt the correctional education program was equivalent to the education programs in a traditional college, and that 80% of faculty were satisfied with their role. Similarly, in interviews conducted with college-level instructors in women's prisons in New York and Virginia, Richard (2017) concluded that instructors were committed to maintaining rigorous academic standards in the prison college classroom. She also found that faculty members held the similar belief that higher education was crucial to successful functioning in society and therefore a right deserved by incarcerated women. Overall, teaching in prison was satisfying and gave meaning to their professional lives (Richard, 2017).

Similar research by Michals & Kessler (2015) explored the motivations for teaching in correctional settings. In interviewing 12 current and former prison instructors, they found that instructors experienced deep satisfaction in observing the transformation of students. They enjoyed helping to improve the quality of prisoners' lives while incarcerated and once they rejoined society. In terms of measuring program effectiveness, none of the instructors mentioned recidivism as their focus. Instead, they spoke about wanting to see their students get a job, live a successful life, and not return to prison. Lawton (2012) also found that instructors liked feeling that they were making a difference by helping others straighten out their lives. Additionally, by interviewing retired correctional educators and administrators, Rice (2019) found that an overwhelming majority of participants did not believe their work alone could reduce recidivism. Instead, instructors and staff noted that they were able to encourage and inspire self-value/worth, hope, and equip offenders with skills, knowledge, and practical skills for addressing issues they would likely face once released.

Other instructors described their role as a form of activism. By interviewing instructors from Ball State University's Department of Extended Education and the author's own teaching experiences, Cantrell (2013) argued that instructors "seek to transform their students into active, aware, and engaged citizens" (p. 3). instructors learn about the racism, sexism, and classism perpetrated by inequalities in the legal system and view their role as activists to address these issues. These researchers point to the need to look beyond recidivism as a measure of the effectiveness of correctional education. Instead, the experiences and perceptions of instructors might give us more insight into

what makes correctional education effective; this paper looks to add to the literature in that sense.

Conceptual Framework

Creemers and Kyriakides (2012), established the Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness based on previous educational effectiveness research, which found that student achievement is influenced by practice at multiple levels. The dynamic model attempts to establish stronger links between effective research and improvement of policy and practice. The dynamic model posits that there are four levels to consider when measuring educational effectiveness: the educational system, the school, the classroom/teacher, and the student. Each level is a multidimensional construct that is defined and measured using five dimensions: Frequency, Focus, Stage, Quality, and Differentiation. Importantly, the model assumes that factors within the school and system level have both direct and indirect effects on student achievement because of their potential to influence student learning either directly or through having an impact on the teaching and learning environment (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2012). Therefore, the model assumes that the levels interact and influence each other. Uniquely, the dynamic model suggests that since not all schools are equally effective, it is not possible to develop a single improvement strategy. Hence, each school must develop its strategies and action plans for improvement.
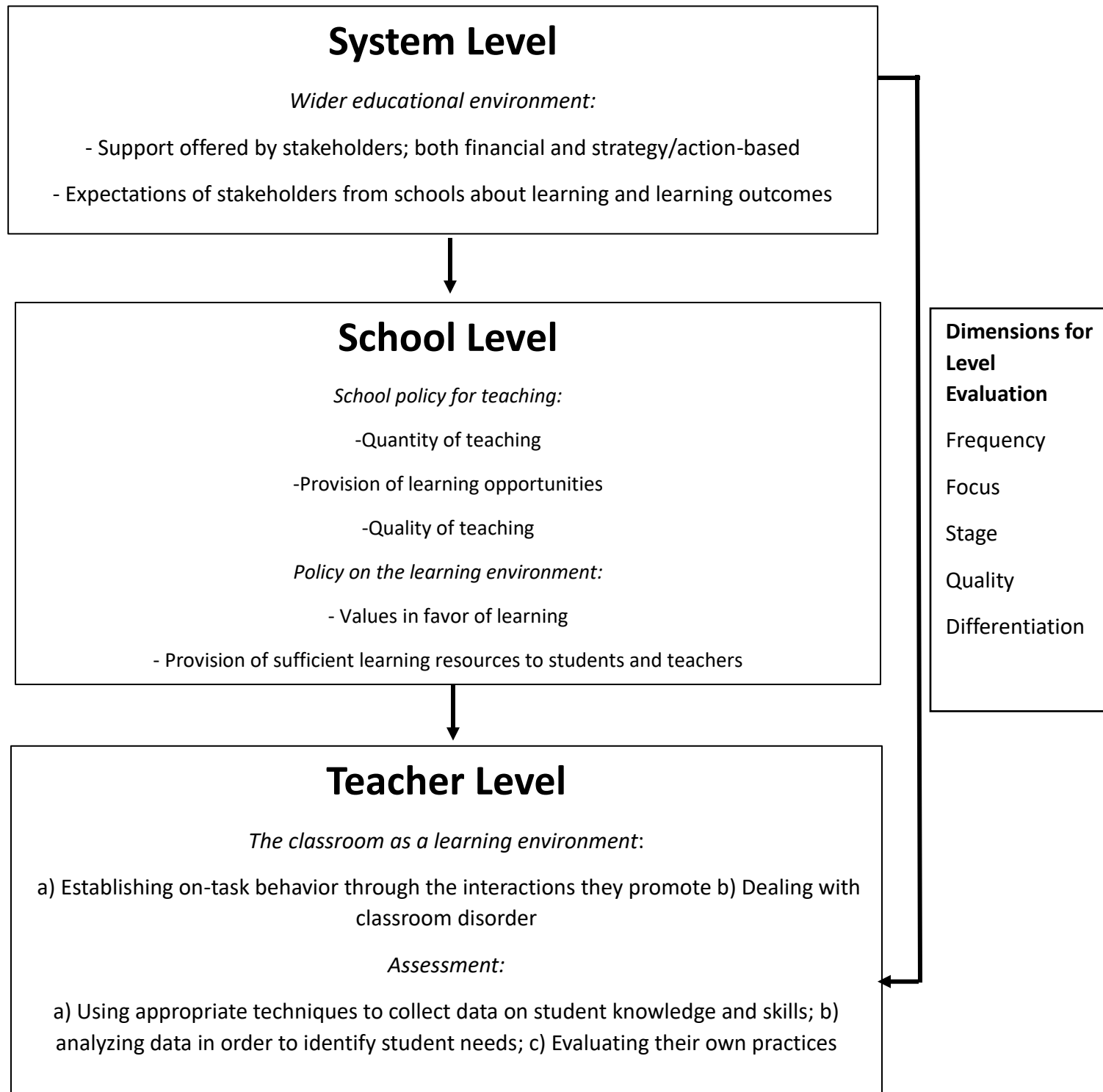
In this study, I used an adapted version of the model to analyze the interview data (See Figure 1). At the system level, I sought to better understand how the wider educational context within the correctional setting is impacting educational effectiveness. Specifically, I looked for evidence of stakeholder support (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2012,

p. 46), in this case from the sheriff's department, both financially and in practice, and to what extent stakeholders offer clearly articulated learning expectations. At the school level, the impact of the community college's policies on teaching and the learning environment was assessed. Specifically, I analyzed how instructors perceived the community college's policies as influencing the quality and quantity of teaching and overall learning opportunities. Additionally, I assessed instructors' perceptions of the extent that the community college's policies value learning and offer resources to students and instructors. At the school level, I also looked at the influence the sheriff's department had in instructional policies and how their presence impacted the experiences of instructors. At the teacher level, I investigated how instructors see themselves as providing a learning environment and how they assess both students and their own performance.

In the adapted model, the student level has been removed. In the original model, the student level considers student expectations, thinking styles, aptitude, and perseverance, and how these influence student achievements. However, in this paper, the research questions focused on instructors and the system they work in—not the achievement of students they teach. At each level, interview data helped to provide strategies and practical approaches this and similar programs can be used to increase instructors' perceptions of program effectiveness. In the end, by adapting the original model, the criteria presented were directly relevant to the case at hand and developed a lens with which to interpret findings.

Figure 1

Model of Correctional Instructors' Perceptions of Educational Effectiveness (Adapted

from Creemers & Kyriakides, 2012)

System Level

Wider educational environment:

- Support offered by stakeholders; both financial and strategy/action-based

- Expectations of stakeholders from schools about learning and learning outcomes

School Level

School policy for teaching:

-Quantity of teaching

-Provision of learning opportunities

-Quality of teaching

Policy on the learning environment:

- Values in favor of learning

- Provision of sufficient learning resources to students and teachers

Dimensions for Level Evaluation

Frequency

Focus

Stage

Quality

Differentiation

Teacher Level

The classroom as a learning environment:

a) Establishing on-task behavior through the interactions they promote b) Dealing with classroom disorder

Assessment:

a) Using appropriate techniques to collect data on student knowledge and skills; b) analyzing data in order to identify student needs; c) Evaluating their own practices

As a relatively new approach for measuring and improving educational effectiveness, there is limited research applying the model. As of 2018, twelve empirical studies and two meta-analyses had been conducted to test the main assumptions of the model. In one of these, Kyriakides et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of 167 studies investigating the impact of several teaching factors on student achievement to test the validity of the teacher/classroom context of the dynamic model. Kyriakides et al. (2013) observed that seven of the eight factors at the teacher level had moderate effect sizes. Even the factor with the lowest effect size, application, still had a significant effect on student learning. Their findings empirically support the validity of the dynamic model at the teacher/classroom level.

This study is unique in that it will use an adapted version of the framework to analyze interview data from correctional education instructors. I apply the adapted model to analyze how the system, the school, and the classroom/teacher levels enhance or impedes program effectiveness. In the end, with the voices of instructors, I provide practical suggestions for adjustments the program can make to improve perceptions of effectiveness.

Methods

According to Yin (2017) case studies are most appropriate when used to answer "how" and "why" research questions. By using the case study method, this study aimed to better understand a complex social phenomenon, the experiences of instructors in correctional facilities. I employed the single case study unit of analysis, to gain in-depth knowledge of one unique case. Specifically, the instructors of one correctional education program made up the case being studied. By following the guidelines of Yin's (2017)

case study methodology, this paper used interview data to provide transferable findings for similar cases.

Program Overview: The Case

The site chosen for this study is that of a partnership between a community college and a local sheriff's department. In this large metropolitan city located in the southern United States, the sheriff's department oversees operations of the local jail. On any given day, the county jail will hold approximately 7,000 individuals. Most of the population is held awaiting pre-trial, with an average stay of 214 days. The jail population is made up primarily of men (92%). In terms of race, the jail population on any given day is approximately 49% Black, 32% White, 17% Hispanic, and 2% Other.

In this partnership, roles and responsibilities are laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), that was written and reviewed by administrators from the community college and sheriff's department. Per the MOU, the sheriff's department offers transportation for students to and from the four sites where classes take place, provides classroom space, hires, and trains education deputies to recruit and screen students for classes, and offers suggestions for which classes should be added or taken away. In exchange, the MOU states that the core responsibilities of the community college are to create a curriculum, hire and train faculty members, provide students with workforce courses that build marketable skills, and assist students with obtaining employment once released.

The community college partner has offered educational programs to individuals under the supervision of the sheriff's department since the 1970s. On average, there are 25 part and full-time faculty members that teach a range of continuing education courses.

Classes are offered at four sites, one of which is a designated vocational education center. In 2018, the correctional education program taught over 1,000 courses to approximately 6,200 students (students counted repeatedly if enrolled in multiple courses) and awarded 1,166 certificates of completion. A list of continuing education courses that lead to certificates of completion is listed in Table 1. Importantly, this program has full accreditation from the Correctional Educational Association (CEA), an organization that develops standards for professional activity and continuing development for correctional educators and the populations they serve. I provide additional details about the case in Thouin (2021).

Table 1

List of Continuing Education Courses Offered

Culinary - Level 1 Prep Cook/Chef 1 and Safe Serve
Auto Body Repair
Auto Mechanics
Welding Technician I
Business Technology (Microsoft Office Specialist)
Graphic Arts (Adobe Photoshop and InDesign)
Logistics (MSSC CLA, CLT, OSHA 10, and Forklift)
Plumbing
Information Technology (CompTIA A+)
Folk Lift Training
Basic Construction (NCCER Core, Roofing, Carpentry, Solar)
Workplace Literacy
Personal Financial Literacy
Cognitive Behavior
Tailoring
OSHA 10
HVAC Technician I
Industrial Scaffolding

| Workplace Professional Preparation |
| Conflict Mediation |

Participants

Participants in this study were purposefully sampled from a list of instructors provided by a gatekeeper at the community college due to their work experience and expertise with this correctional education program (Gaikwad, 2017). Each of the five participants had 10 or more years of experience teaching for the correctional education programs offered by the community college. These individuals are current community college employees that provide or oversee continuing education courses at the designated vocational education site. Table 2 assigns pseudonyms to the participants and outlines their job titles, the type of program they currently teach in, and the number of years they have worked for this correctional education program.

Table 2

Participant Information

Participant Pseudonym	Participant Job Title	Type of Program	Experience in Correctional Education
Meghan	Jail Full-Time Instructor	Vocational	15 years
Greg	Jail Full-Time Instructor	Vocational	11 years
Rachel	Parolee Full-Time Instructor, Former Jail Instructor	Vocational	16 years
Charles	Probation Full-Time Instructor	Vocational	30 years
Hope	Department Chair, Former Jail Full-Time Instructor	Vocational	10 years

Data Collection and Analysis

This study had the full approval of the university-affiliated and community college IRB offices before data collection began. In this case, interviews were the main source of data, although I also triangulated interview findings by examining copies of course syllabi, enrollment reports, and administrative emails. Each of the five participants participated in a semi-structured interview that lasted up to 60 minutes. Due to Covid-19, these interviews took place over Skype. Therefore, consent forms and permission to record the interview were received via email before the interview. Additionally, each participant was informed that they would be given a pseudonym for confidentiality. Before the start of each interview, the participants were debriefed of the purpose of the study and informed that their responses would remain confidential. All five participants were interviewed using the same interview protocol and were asked the same core questions (See Appendix A). However, due to the nature of semi-structured interviews, follow-up questions varied based on responses to initial questions. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

This study used the thematic analysis method to analyze the interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In doing so, I made sense of the collective or shared meaning and experiences of the instructors interviewed. Using this method, I applied the six-phase approach to coding and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The six steps in Braun and Clarke's (2006) method are: familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and writing the report. In the end, I aimed to provide examples and analyze enough data to convince the reader that the themes I suggest were evident in the data.

Findings

The purpose of this paper was to better understand the experience of instructors in correctional settings and their perceptions of program effectiveness. Using the process of thematic analysis, two themes were generated from the data: The first theme, *adaptability is key,* speaks to the first research question, and highlights that the correctional setting has a range of obstacles for instructors to navigate. Under this theme, key challenges such as resources, student ability, and class-time disruptions became sub-themes. The second theme, *effectiveness goes beyond recidivism,* speaks to the second research question, and explains that instructors and correctional staff use different metrics for measuring program outcomes. As a sub-theme, the lack of student tracking is further explored as hindering the measurement of program effectiveness. Since findings were analyzed using the adapted Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness, suggestions are made throughout on how the program can improve based on the experiences of their instructors.

Theme One: Adaptability is Key

Interview participants explained that the key to being successful in a correctional setting was the ability to adapt. Instructors were forced to adjust to challenges that were to the correctional setting. Greg mentioned that without access to the internet, "you have to be really creative, and that requires lots of hours outside of the classroom." Others, like Meghan summarized adaptability in the following statement.

> I've learned how to adapt to my environment, and I know that I can. So, I am okay with working in that environment, [because] for me [it] is the impact that I have on my students, you know? Can I still have that same impact without the technology that I really truly need? And, yes I can.

These instructors' ability to adapt might be attributed to their length of time working in correctional settings. For example, Charles has only taught in correctional settings, and has been working in this program for over 30 years. He mentioned that at the beginning he was nervous about teaching in this setting. Over time, he has found the job to be easier and more fun than he had first expected. Rachel also noted that since she had been working in this setting for so long (16 years), that she was rarely aware of the challenges faced by instructors in carceral institutions. This was reiterated by Rachel, who had worked for the program for 10 years. She recalled that "a lot of people are kind of hesitant to work in corrections…but it's the easiest job I've ever had in the classroom." Thus, these findings build on Wright's (2005) concept of culture shock, by adding that the feelings of bewilderment, confusion, and disorientation fade over time when instructors learn to adapt.

Sub-Theme One: Resources

For many of the instructors, the need to adapt to the environment comes from a lack of resources. For Greg, the lack of internet access demands a level of creativity in lesson planning and more hours outside of the classroom looking for content that he can show students once he is in the classroom. Additionally, Meghan, an instructor in the jail, noted similar difficulties when it comes to internet access.

> We cannot bring anything in. We have desktop computers there already, and it has all the software loaded up on the computers already. So their typing program is already loaded on the computer, and all they have to do is start logging in and begin typing. Same thing with Microsoft Office. It is already loaded on computer; we do not have internet access. I don't even have internet access at my desk. So,

it's very challenging because if you want to do something different, you know I

used to run to the internet [in traditional education settings] and pull up something

right quick, you can't do that.

Rachel noted that the lack of resources may be a matter of politics within the college; teachers are forced to go through numerous steps with the college to get the resources they need, and then told that there is not enough room in the budget. Others, like Greg, believe that this decision comes down to the jail authority. Greg attributed the lack of technology for instruction to "law enforcement staff who for various reasons don't believe this population should have access to the internet for security reasons. That's the number one thing they quote all the time." Additionally, Rachel suggested that the college has not always followed through on its promises.

There were some promises a lot of times, but they never manifested themselves.

So sometimes it was that maybe we weren't, from the perspective of the higher-

ups, that maybe this [program] is not as significant. I hate to put it that way. But

maybe their thought was that the monies should go to other programs versus the

jail.

These comments suggest an interaction between the system, school, and teacher level of the framework. Without support for access to technology from the stakeholders (sheriff's department), instructors are impacted in terms of their quality of teaching and the ability to create a learning environment in their classrooms.

As the department chair, Hope realizes the constraints the lack of resources places on her instructors but did not believe internet access can be done safely; "there are so many more resources that we could have if we had internet and computers. But, would

people [students] take advantage of it? Yeah. So it's not something that, you know, our controlled environment could have now."

Overall, without access to internet, technology, and sometimes basic resources, these instructors are asked to teach college-level courses without some of the most necessary tools. These obstacles speak to the school-level of the framework. Based on the need for "provision of sufficient learning resources to students and teachers," it can be concluded based on the experiences of the instructors, that there is a deficiency in this need being met. Additionally, the school-level asks that there are "values in favor of learning." Based on instructors' comments, the correctional staff does not have the same values or beliefs about students and the overall program. This also alludes to a system-level issue, differences in ideologies between correctional and education staff. The system-level asks that the wider educational environment provide, "support offered by stakeholders; both financial and strategy/action-based." Based on the comments from participants, the correctional staff, or stakeholders in this context, are not as supportive of the mission and/or goals of the college. At the same time, instructors mentioned that the lack of resources is due to lengthy processes and budgetary restraints within the college. Thus, these findings suggest that access to resources is a complex issue that cannot be blamed on only one institution within this partnership.

Sub-Theme Two: Student Ability

In addition to a lack of resources within this setting, instructors also noted that the varying level of student ability requires instructors' to adapt to the specific needs of their students. As Rachel explained, "You don't know who you're going to get in class. You might get a master's degree and a [student with a] third-grade education in the [same]

classroom." Teaching a construction course to probationers, Charles has noted an upward trend in students who do not speak English. Therefore, finding modifications or translated documents has become a necessary task.

> I get more and more inmate students that don't speak English; don't read English. So they'll fumble their way through. I don't speak a foreign language, either. So I've been over the years trying to translate some of the text into Spanish. I've been able to find videos and some pamphlets from OSHA that are also in Spanish, and it's helped tremendously. That's, you know, some of the biggest limitations [that I have].

In the end, the responsibility to modify materials comes down to the instructors. As Hope described, student abilities vary in every classroom in the program.

> [It's] a challenge, because in every single class you're going to have students that don't speak English. You're going to have students that can't read. You're going to have to, you know, know that. And each instructor has to work with that student individually or maybe like a translator or just somebody that can help.

Again, the lack of resources and assistance leaves instructors on an island to provide high-quality instruction with little aid. Additionally, teachers did not mention support from the college to meet the needs of students. Looking at the framework, these findings suggest a deficiency at the school level. Also, the actions by instructors to meet the needs of their students speak to the teacher-level of the framework. By going out of their way to make sure students understand the course material and assessing student needs, there is a clear sense that instructors care to create "classrooms as the learning environment".

Sub-Theme Three: Class Time Disruptions

A range in student abilities was not the sole cause for the need to modify instruction. In the correctional setting, instructors are *guests* of the facility. As such, they are often impacted by the rules and regulations of the jail. For example, Charles experienced absenteeism from his students due to legal matters. "A lot of absenteeism. So they fall behind quickly. The courses are not cumbersome in terms of there's a lot to do. But if they missed two or three days or a week in court, they've got a lot of catching up to do if they want to be able to take the next test." Additionally, he experienced an array of disruptions to his class time, "Class interruptions. Some days, none. Some days a handful. People coming in looking for somebody because they've got to go to court, or they got to go to clinic, or something like that. It's the disruptions that can kind of make the day harder to deal with." Likewise, Greg lost class time regularly for something as simple as a maintenance issue. "Some sort of maintenance issue, say the elevators may not be working. We may get our students late."

These responses from instructors create questions about how the correctional staff views the value of correctional education. It could be that the correctional staff is not concerned about the time students spend in class because they do not believe incarcerated individuals deserve education, their main obligation is to safety, or that since these courses are non-credit there is no credit-hour requirement that they must uphold. As Rachel mentioned, these class time disruptions can last for an extended period depending on the situation. Nevertheless, securing the students is the jail's number one priority, not education.

> You know, security's going come first. That's just the nature of the beast.
>
> Security's going to come first if something happens. If let's say there's a fire drill

or whatever you know or, they can't clear [inmate] count. And you still don't have

your students; those students are not coming. Until count is clear. And it could be

two hours later. So that's a lot of it you know; that delay of class time.

More experienced instructors came to recognize that security measures come first and

that they must work around the delays. As previously mentioned, Charles was nervous to

work in correctional settings before he began his career, but now finds the job easy and

fun. Also, Greg noted, these delays may prove challenging to novice instructors, but that

overtime you learn to handle the disruptions.

So that means when you finally get your student, you have a lot to give to them in

a very short period of time. And that has often proved difficult. I'm going to say

this; in the beginning, it's going to prove difficult for a beginning educator in the

field of education in this teaching environment, but after a while, you really get a

hand a handle on it.

Overall, class-time disruptions can occur for security reasons, an individual being moved

from one facility to another, a maintenance issue, or other factors that instructors in a

traditional school setting would not have to deal with. These findings highlight

challenges at the school level for promoting effectiveness: "quantity of teaching" and

"provision of learning opportunities." Additionally, at the system level, these findings

highlight a need for the correctional staff to schedule counts, drills, or other disruptions at

times in which students are not in class. In the end, these challenges are likely

unavoidable in this setting but are nonetheless creating obstacles to effectiveness in the

eyes of the instructors.

Theme Two: Effectiveness Goes Beyond Recidivism

While instructors noted that their performance was monitored by a department chair and an annual review, there was less of a consensus on how the program itself was effective. When asked how they measured the program's effectiveness most respondents spoke to factors that go beyond measuring recidivism. For example, Meghan noted that she knew she was making a difference from the letters that students sent back to her. She remembered having students say that they decided to enroll in college because of her. Others, like Greg, mentioned that the instructors in the program give students instruction that is going to "rehabilitate them and help restore them to society, and ultimately transform their lives." Similarly, Rachel spoke to "making a difference in the lives of the students you're teaching." These comments loosely speak to "values in favor of learning" at the school level. Overall, these instructors are less focused on reducing recidivism (the goal of the sheriff's department), and more on the transformative effect education can have on individual's lives.

Instructors also mentioned that by teaching equivalent courses to that of the traditional setting, they felt the program was indeed effective. Meghan noted that "students are gaining the same knowledge as if they were in the other settings because we're still teaching them as they are students…as far as the education itself, honestly the only difference is the setting." Others noted that by matching learning outcomes and by modifying materials to accommodate the students and the setting, they successfully taught and improved the lives of their students. Therefore, because the syllabi are set so that the classes are equivalent to traditional settings, we can conclude that at the school level, there are policies in place to ensure "quality of teaching."

Sub-Theme One: Tracking

Throughout the interviews, instructors had anecdotes of helping individual students, but they vocalized their uncertainty on the overall effectiveness of the program due to an inability to track students' post-release. Meaning that, once students are released from jail, there was no way of knowing whether they gained employment. As the program stands now, the only method of tracking students is if they enroll at the community college post-release. Greg explained the program evaluation process as:

> So, if we are providing high-quality education, then we should be able to see that these people will not return to jail. And the only way we're able to track them now is if they leave the correctional education program, and then go right on into college at [community college] on the academic side.

Therefore, many instructors were unsure of how effective the program was in equipping students with the skills for gainful employment. For Charles, the problem can partially be explained by the transient nature of the students they teach:

> The problem is that our students are so fluid in terms of how long they may stay [in jail]. I may have a full classroom of 15 students, but they make a bond and they're gone. And at any given time, they could be shipped off to [nearby prison name omitted]. So completions are hard to come by. If I have a particular section that had six students in it, by the time I get done half of them could be gone. And those that are left, I may or may not be able to complete them because they missed too much time.

Additionally, Rachel added that many students' home situations may be a factor when trying to reach out to students who completed a certificate while in jail.

This population moves around quite a bit. Some are homeless, some lose their homes or wherever they live when they come to jail. So, it's kind of hard to track the students even if the student is eligible for a certificate and they leave before the last day. Then we tell them we can mail your certificate to you just give us the address, or we can use the address that they enrolled with, but a lot of the certificates come back because you know, something has happened. So it's kind of hard to keep track of them when their situation changes, you know, daily or monthly.

Greg commented that, "the majority of the time when they are released from jail or prison, they don't want to have anything to do, in particular, with law enforcement personnel" and that this can add to the difficulty of large-scale tracking practices. Therefore, the only current method of knowing if a student has been employed after being released is if they reach out to the correctional education program personally. As Greg mentioned,

Some of them do somehow find us and reach back to the program and reach out to the director. Then we know how well they're doing because they'll tell us. They may call back in or email the directors or send letters to the directors, that, you know, they appreciate what the faculty did for them, they appreciated a program like ours, but that's on a small scale. On a larger scale, it doesn't happen, not with us, not with most correctional education programs, because it is really difficult tracking them [students].

This sentiment was reiterated by Hope who commented that,

You know unless a student emails us and says hey you know like, I need a reprint

of my certificates I'm applying for this job, or, or my employer needs this; we

don't know that they're out there with a job. Sometimes we know when they return

because they may enroll again, but as far as when they leave there's no record of

that; unless they enroll in a [community college] course.

These comments point to several different factors within the teacher level of the

framework. First, they point to the fact that there is a lack of "appropriate techniques to

collect data on student knowledge and skills." It is safe to assume then that these

instructors are also not "analyzing data in order to identify student needs." Though these

are factors within the teacher level of the framework, these are aspects of the program

that should be done at the school level. Beyond that, the findings also highlight that the

program does not assess an important positive effect of correctional education programs,

employment. In the end, the inability to track students' employment post-release means

that instructors are not able to use data to inform their teaching practices and improve

student outcomes. At the same time, the instructors themselves are less concerned with

recidivism, and more worried that they make a meaningful impact in the lives of their

students.

Limitations

This study was limited in the number of participants interviewed. However,

during the stage of participant selection, Covid-19 drastically changed the professional

and personal lives of faculty members, leaving several participants unable to participate.

Nonetheless, the group of participants holds expert knowledge, due to their longevity

within the program. I was able to increase validity by providing a thick description of the

site and participants, analyzing interview data, and conducting peer examination in the

data analysis stage (Merriam, 1998).

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to better understand the experiences of

instructors working in correctional settings and their perceptions of program

effectiveness. To this end, this study asked*:*

(1)How do instructors describe their experience in correctional settings

(2) How do instructors perceive effective education in correctional settings?

By interviewing correctional education instructors, two themes were generated

from the transcript data and then analyzed using an adapted version of Creemers

and Kyriakides' (2012) Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness. In the

following section, I discuss the findings as they relate to the research questions,

previous literature, and the framework.

RQ One: How do instructors describe their experience in correctional settings?

The first research question was answered through the first theme,

adaptability is key. Importantly, each participant mentioned that they genuinely

enjoyed their job, stating in one form or another that they would not have stayed

at a position this long if they were not satisfied with the work they were doing.

Nevertheless, most of the conversations on their experience led to discussions

about the challenges they experienced on the job.

For some, these were issues with resources. Instructors noted that this

setting prohibits the materials they can bring into class, the materials they have

access to once in the building, and access to the internet. These findings are

aligned with work by Tewksbury & Van Nostrand (1996), Meyer & Fredericks

(2010), and Edwards-Willey & Chivers (2005). Instructors also noted that the

range of student abilities in the classroom proved challenging, which is in line

with work by Jurich et al. (2001). Thirdly, participants were frustrated by class-

time disruptions, which is consistent with research by Van Gundy et al. (2013).

Finally, instructors alluded to a disconnect between correctional and educational

staff ideologies. These differences often make it difficult to make pedagogical

changes inside the classroom and impact broader structural issues within the

program. This similar issue has been discussed by McCarthy (2006), Van Gundy

et al. (2013), and more recently by Thouin (2021).

When looking at these findings through the lens of the framework, there is both

evidence of effectiveness, and room for improvement. At the system-level, the sheriff's

department, as the stakeholder, is described by instructors as lacking in support for the

instructors and student's needs. Thus, there is evidence that instructors in this program

believe the cultural differences between themselves and correctional staff are impeding

the program's ability to be effective. At the school level, I found evidence that the

policies and procedures within the correctional setting made it difficult to provide

sufficient learning resources to students and instructors and impacted the quantity of

teaching time these individuals had with their students. Also, at the school level, the

findings highlight that instructors are dedicated and hold values that are in favor of

learning; as seen by their commitment to teaching students at various ability levels and

with language barriers. By using this framework, the instructor's voices are instrumental in helping to identify ways in which the program can increase effectiveness.

RQ Two: How do instructors perceive effective education in correctional settings?

Research question two was answered through the second theme, "effectiveness goes beyond recidivism." Here, instructors mentioned a variety of ways they assessed the effectiveness of the program. For one instructor, the notes or emails written back to her from former students reassured her that she was doing good work. Others noted that being able to make a difference in the lives of their students and being a part of their rehabilitation process made their work meaningful. The idea that instructors are more concerned with educating incarcerated individuals than its ability to reduce recidivism adds to research by Cantrell (2013), Lawton (2012), Michals & Kessler (2015), and Rice (2019). Additionally, instructors were reassured of the quality of the program by teaching the same curriculum to students *inside* as they would in the traditional setting. The finding that instructors believe the quality of education in correctional settings is as rigorous as on-campus courses are also in line with previous research by Barringer-Brown (2015) and Richard (2007).

The sub-theme, *tracking*, provides critical insight into measuring correctional program effectiveness. Instructors mentioned that the program had difficulty tracking student's post-release. This was caused by several factors including individuals being transferred to other facilities, administrators were unable to find students post-release due to housing insecurity or homelessness, and students not wanting to communicate with correctional staff post-release. According to the instructors in this program, the only way

they were able to track the outcomes of their students is if the individual was released and then enrolled at this particular community college, or if they contacted administrators post-release to request a course certificate that they could show an employer. This is a unique finding from the literature presented above and is key to better understanding how programs can improve their method of measuring program outcomes.

When analyzed through the lens of the Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness, these findings illuminate key areas where instructors believe the program is effective and where it can improve. At the school level, there is clear evidence that instructors possess values in favor of learning. Instructors are devoted to making an impact in the lives of their students and are dedicated to offering a level of education that is synonymous with traditional settings. At the same time, instructors admitted that the true effectiveness of the program is unknown. Therefore, the teacher-level factors of using appropriate techniques to collect data on student knowledge and skills; and analyzing data to identify student needs are unmet.

Implications and Future Research

This study adds to a limited body of literature on the experiences of community college instructors working in correctional settings. At the same time, this study found similar experiences explored in studies dating back to the early 90's. As correctional education programs emerge in the years to come due to access to Pell Grants, these findings can be used by college and correctional administrators to improve the work conditions of instructors along with the learning conditions of students. Below I discuss implications as they pertain specifically to the framework and leaders at community colleges. Lastly, I suggest areas that future research should explore.

Implications per the Framework

The Model of Correctional Instructors' Perceptions of Educational Effectiveness adapted from Creemers & Kyriakides (2012) was designed to identify factors at the system, school, and teacher level that impact educational effectiveness (See Figure 1). Based on the framework and formed by the findings, there are four specific practices that can be implemented by this program and similar ones to improve educational effectiveness. First, at the system-level there is evidence that the stakeholders (sheriff's department) do not hold the same beliefs about the importance and purpose of education for incarcerated students as the instructors. This is a deep-rooted issue that has been explored in an earlier study by Thouin (2021). For this and similar programs, it is important for college and correctional staff to openly discuss these differences and work together for the benefit of students. This could be done by implementing bi-weekly or monthly staff meetings where team members share frustrations, best-practices, and successes they have had.

At the school-level, there was evidence that correctional staff often disrupt students learning time. Additionally, instructors were frustrated with the lack of resources the correctional setting provided. Thus, college and correctional staff should jointly write in their memorandum of understanding (MOU) when and how correctional staff can disrupt class time. Secondly, an addition to the MOU should be made to clearly outline who is responsible for providing resources to instructors and students. This includes access to the internet and translated documents for non-native English speakers. By doing so, instructors can provide quality, equitable, and consistent education to their students. Lastly, at the teacher-level, there was a unique finding about the ability to track student

outcomes post-release. Without data, instructors are unable to identify areas of improvement and implement those changes. At the same time, collecting large-scale data like this is not the responsibility of the teachers alone. Instead, the college should look to create a method of assessment for student outcomes. This might take the form of a survey students can complete post-release.

Implications for Community Colleges

As earlier stated, most of the previous research examined programs in prisons and with university faculty. In contrast, this study found a particular challenge for those in the jail setting. Due to several factors including posting bail, awaiting trial, or being moved to another facility, instructors in the jails experienced an increase in student absenteeism. This is something that community colleges should consider when deciding what type of institution, they are going to partner with to offer educational services.

Secondly, this study found that over-time teachers become accustomed to the obstacles that working in correctional settings created. At the same time, almost all participants mentioned their frustrations or worries at the beginning of their career. This and earlier findings by Wright (2005) and Kallman (2020) call for community colleges to provide specific training for those going to work in correctional settings. Aside from the security training that these instructors receive, there are other key professional development opportunities that could set them up to be successful from the start.

Future Research

Future research should look at the method's other post-secondary correctional education programs use to measure program outcomes. Along with recidivism, the tracking of occupational outcomes of individuals post-release will give the public and

policymakers a clearer and more accurate picture of the effectiveness of correctional education; this research is key to moving away from solely recidivism-based outcomes. Additionally, research should further examine what makes effective teaching in correctional settings. Especially as the ban on Pell Grants is lifted, ensuring high-quality teaching is key to positive program outcomes.

Conclusion

After 26 years, individuals in state and federal prisons will be able to apply and receive federal Pell Grants to support their post-secondary education. As the leading provider of post-secondary education in correctional facilities, community colleges are uniquely positioned to make an impact on the lives of incarcerated individuals. Thus, as the field of correctional education expands, the voices and experiences of instructors will prove instrumental in carrying out the goals of these programs. This study added to the limited literature on instructors working in carceral settings, highlighting the challenges that instructors face on the job, their motivations for working with this population, and the key factors they believe are impacting program effectiveness. In the end, this paper concluded that though instructors in this program enjoy their job and believe they are offering equivalent education to that of a traditional college, there are cultural differences between correctional and education staff that need to be addressed and there is currently no method of tracking students post-release that would give them knowledge on instructor or program educational effectiveness.

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Appendix A

1. Can you describe your current role within the correctional education program?

2. Tell me about your experience of being an instructor in the correctional education program:

    a) Can you describe the day-to-day activities that you take part in?

    b) How would you explain the benefits and challenges of being an instructor in this program?

3. How would you describe the teaching philosophy and pedagogy within the correctional education program?

4. How would you describe the evaluation processes to assess the effectiveness of the correctional education program?

    a) How does the evaluation process compare to other instructional settings, such as the general population?

    b) How does the effectiveness of the program compare to other instructional settings?

5. Can you describe the ways in which the program aligns with the curriculum of college courses?

    a) How does the program accommodate the needs of diverse students?

    b) How does the program meet the projected occupational needs of its students?

6. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience as a teacher in a correctional facility?

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

There were approximately 6.4 million persons in U.S. prisons, jails, on probation, or parole in 2018 (Maruschak & Minton, 2020). To address the U.S.' longstanding issue of mass incarceration, correctional education has been cited as an effective method for preparing individuals for life post-release. By participating in correctional education, individuals can reduce their chances of recidivism (Aos et al., 2006; Davis et al., 2013; Mackenzie, 2006; Wilson et al., 2000) and improve their chances of employment post-release (Davis et al., 2013; Oakford et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2000). Additionally, by reducing the number of incarcerated individuals, states can save a combined $365.8 million per year (Oakford et al., 2019). Even with the noted positive effects of providing incarcerated individuals with educational opportunities, this population has had too few educational opportunities.

As part of the U.S.' "tough on crime" agenda, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act passed in 1994 banned access to Pell Grants for individuals in prison. In response, postsecondary correctional education programs dwindled (Lillis, 1994; Scott, 2015); between 1990 and 2005, the number of correctional education programs decreased by approximately 23% (Turner, 2018). With the introduction of the Second Chance Pell Program in 2015 and its expansion in 2020, 130 colleges and universities were able to use funding from Pell Grants to offer postsecondary education in carceral settings. As a result of additional federal funding, over 200 credit-bearing institutions were providing postsecondary education to incarcerated individuals in 2018; the majority of these being 2-year institutions (Castro et al., 2018).

While I wrote this dissertation, Congress voted to overturn the longstanding ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals (Green, 2020). This decision opens the door for colleges and universities to partner with correctional institutions and provide post-secondary education to those who could not otherwise afford to earn a degree or certificate. Additionally, it creates a sense of urgency for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to better understand how to offer high-quality post-secondary education inside carceral settings.

Thus, this study is both timely and critical for better understanding partnerships between community colleges and sheriff's departments that work together to offer educational opportunities for justice-involved students. The findings of this study aim to provide recommendations to the particular program studied and administrators in similar partnerships, and to inform policymakers at the state and federal level. The remainder of this chapter summarizes the data collection process, findings, implications, and recommendations arising from the study.

Data Collection Process

This case study focuses on a long-standing correctional education partnership between a community college and a local sheriff's department. This dissertation explores different aspects of the case in three stand-alone manuscripts. Taken together, the three manuscripts create a robust image of the decision-making processes within the partnership, the challenges administrators and teachers face in offering education within this partnership, and the opportunities this program has to improve.

In the first paper (Chapter Two), I aim to better understand the decision-making processes within this partnership and explore factors that are facilitating or impeding the

success of the partnership. To do so, I conducted four interviews with administrative staff, three of which work for the community college and one that works for the sheriff's department. Additionally, I conduct a document analysis of 10 administrative documents such as an employee training booklet, enrollment reports, a memorandum of understanding, administrative emails, and an audit report.

In the second paper (Chapter Three), I aim to better understand how the partnership is structured to offer educational opportunities that build marketable skills, and examine which structures are benefiting or impeding the development of these skills. To do so, this study uses the interview data from paper one, chapter two. Additionally, I analyze eight documents including a course syllabus, enrollment reports, administrative emails, a pre-service handbook, a screening handbook, a memorandum of understanding, and an audit report.

In the third paper (Chapter Four), I aim to better understand the experience of instructors in a correctional setting and how they perceive effectiveness in correctional education. To do so, I interview five instructors employed by the community college who work in a variety of correctional settings. I also triangulate interview data with the same course syllabi, enrollment reports, administrative emails, memorandum of understanding, and employee handbooks as used in the first two papers.

Summary of Findings

In Chapter two, I find that the memorandum of understanding (MOU) helps administrators at both organizations understand their roles and responsibilities. At the same time, the MOU is at times ambiguous and leads to frustration and confusion among administrators. For example, the MOU states that the community college will choose the

courses and the curriculum, but administrators mentioned that course offerings are often decided by the Sheriff's department. I also find that there are cultural differences between correctional and educational staff that impact how decisions are made and implemented. On one side of the partnership, the community college states that they want students to become viable and productive citizens within the community. On the other side of the partnership, the Sheriff's department notes that it is committed to strong law enforcement, crime control, and fiscal responsibility. Additionally, while the community college views its role as an agent of change, the Sheriff's department is a traditional command and control operation.

In Chapter three, I find that the partners embed the goal of equipping students with workforce skills into multiple facets of the program structure. For example, this goal is explicitly stated in documents such as the memorandum of understanding and pre-service handbook. Secondly, the course curriculum mirrors courses taught in traditional settings at the community college. Thirdly, the sheriff's department is intentional about the courses they allow students to take. Thus, they place students into courses that would lead to employment, after accounting for previous offenses. I also find that the program is slow to react and make changes based on changing circumstances. For example, administrators from the community college have repeatedly asked for increased access to technology, both for instructors and students to use in the classroom. Secondly, administrators at both organizations noted the lack of equality in courses offered to women compared to men; there are substantially fewer workforce courses offered to women than men. Finally, administrators voiced frustrations about their inability to assess student outcomes post-release. Unless a student re-offends, enrolls at the

community college post-release, or emails the program an update or for a course certificate, the program has no way of knowing if it is meeting the goal of building workforce skills.

In Chapter four, I find that teachers in this program have adapted over time to the unique constraints and obstacles of working in correctional settings. Instructors in this program speak to the lack of resources available to them and students, specifically the inability to access the internet, the additional time it takes to translate documents for non-English speakers, and the numerous class-time disruptions by correctional staff. I also find that instructors measure the effectiveness of the program in terms of feeling like they are making a difference, instead of by the program's ability to reduce recidivism (one of the sheriff's department's goals). Lastly, building on findings from chapter three, I find that due to difficulty tracking students post-release, the program currently does not have a way to measure effectiveness in terms of employment, a pathway to college, or recidivism once students are released. This means instructors are unable to adjust or improve their teaching to improve student outcomes.

Implications & Recommendations

As the number of postsecondary programs in correctional facilities grows, there is an emerging need to ensure that these programs offer high-quality educational opportunities to incarcerated individuals. Thus, the findings of this timely and critical study may be of use not only to this partnership but to similar partnerships that will emerge from the increased federal funding available through Pell Grants. Specifically, community college administrators can look to this study when developing new partnerships with jails and prisons, making structural program decisions, writing their

MOU, hiring instructors, and making joint decisions with correctional staff. Also, policymakers can look to this study when creating procedures that ensure the quality of correctional education programs. In the following sections, I outline recommendations that the partnership as a whole, the community college, and the Sheriff's department can make to improve their program.

Partnership

One of the first steps this partnership should take is to update its MOU. Specifically, the MOU should be updated to clearly outline which organization is in charge of choosing the courses taught. Since this is not outlined in the current MOU, the Sheriff's department holds a significant amount of power in this decision-making process. If the community college wishes to hold autonomy over the courses and curriculum, then clarification in the MOU is necessary. In addition to the MOU, the partnership should also rewrite a shared program outcome and goal statement. In this new shared statement, the language should be consistent and represent the population served as students, not inmates. Lastly, the partnership should aim to hold monthly (if not more frequently) meetings for all administrators and correctional staff involved in the education program. Here, staff can discuss student behavior issues, upcoming events, best practices, current research, and other topics that will create a shared culture between correctional and education staff.

Community College

The community college has a unique opportunity to prove that by offering educational opportunities in carceral settings, their students transfer to college, are employed, or are less likely to recidivate post-release. Currently, the program is unable to

argue that they can do any of these. Therefore, the college must create a method of assessment for the program. One strategy may be to create and distribute a survey to former students. This survey could ask questions about students' current employment status, if they enrolled in college since leaving the program, and if and how the program set them up for re-entry into their communities. Another strategy could be to use enrollment data or identifying information (social security numbers) kept by the community college to search individuals in databases for employment, yearly earnings, and educational attainment.

Secondly, the college needs to offer additional training for new instructors. As the findings illustrate, there are unique challenges that instructors face when working in correctional education. Thus, along with safety training, instructors should have professional development opportunities unique to those that teach in these settings; one such opportunity could be to attend a state, regional, or national conference for correctional staff.

Sheriff's Department

The Sheriff's department can significantly contribute to the improvement of this program, with two recommended changes. First, the Sheriff's department should approve, provide, and expand access to technology for educational purposes. As the world continues to become more digital and reliant on technology, students should be offered courses that will lead them to professions in this field. This can be done through the use of lockdown browsers, which limit what an individual can access on the computer. Sheriff's department staff can look at successful examples in both North Carolina and New Mexico for how to implement this type of software. For example, programs in North

Carolina developed their own intranet platform called "i-Net", which provides limited internet access for students (Davis & Tolbert, 2019, p. 16). Similarly, Eastern New Mexico University offers online classes to students at nine correctional facilities in New Mexico. Students access the university's Blackboard site from a computer that has a lockdown browser (Burke, 2019). Along with giving students access to necessary technology, this change will also improve instruction by allowing instructors to translate documents on-the-spot, or access videos for instructional purposes quickly.

Secondly, the Sheriff's department should approve the transportation and additional space for an increased number of vocational course offerings for women. As the program stands, few up-to-date course offerings will lead to gainful employment for the steadily increasing number of incarcerated women. Thus, to improve the equality of educational opportunities, the Sheriff's department needs to allow women to be taught the same vocational courses offered to men.

Conclusion

In conclusion, for this program to continue the important work that this partnership has accomplished over the years, it should adjust itself accordingly, overtime. Some of the ways I point out that this can be done is to increase access to technology including computers and closed circuit internet access, rewrite or make additions to the memorandum of understanding (MOU), offer equitable course offerings for men and women, and measure program effectiveness by student employability and educational outcomes. Overall, by conducting interviews with key administrators and instructors, I gained unique insight into this correctional education program, allowing me to offer

recommendations that can improve the quality of the education program, the relationship between the two organizations, and student outcomes.

I propose three possible directions for future research to explore. First, though this study focused on correctional education, the findings have implications for the ways in which community colleges and other institutions of higher education partner with other organizations (government agencies, industry, non-profit). This study illustrated how important it is for organizations to consider how their values align, clarity in roles and responsibilities, and power dynamics when forming a partnership. These factors are even more important to consider when partnerships are developed to serve marginalized students; partnerships need to work well for these students, not just 'good enough.' Future research could explore the importance of these factors in different partnerships.

Secondly, future research should examine other types of correctional education partnerships. Research could explore partnerships in different contexts such as new partnerships, partnerships in different parts of the country (this study is situated in a large metropolitan city in the southeast United States), partnerships that allow access to the internet, and partnerships between four-year institutions and jails or prisons. This study had transferrable implications for community college and jail partnerships, but looking at other types of partnerships can have implications for improving this site and other correctional education programs.

Thirdly, I encourage more types of evaluation and assessment work of correctional education programs. Specifically, work that examines students outcomes post-release such as enrolling in higher education and gaining employment. A large piece of what is missing from these three papers is the student experience. Though it may be

more challenging, in terms of IRB, there is an exciting opportunity for additional work to include the voices of students. In the end, there are promising avenues for researchers to explore to improve the quality of educational programs for incarcerated students.

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