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## Previously Incarcerated Individuals' Perception of Job Acquisition Post Transitional Program Participation

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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

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Program Participation

by

Arbutas Washington

MA, Walden University, 2016

BS, University of Southern Mississippi, 1987

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human and Social Services

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## Abstract

Transitional programs prepare previously incarcerated individuals (PIIs) to re-enter society and acquire employment. However, many such programs have failed to offset the effects of prisonization, a process that affects the social skills needed for the job interview process and employment acquisition. The purpose of this generic qualitative research study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of PIIs after participation in a transitional program and a job interview. The theoretical foundation for the study included the theories of prisonization and self-efficacy. The research question concerned experiences and perceptions of 23 to 39-year-old PIIs regarding the job interview process after serving a prison sentence of 5 or more years and participating in a transitional program. The study involved a purposeful and snowball sampling strategy, online recruitment using Facebook, and an eight-step process of content analysis. The results from four PIIs revealed four overarching themes: (a) inadequate transition programs leave PIIs unprepared for the interview process and mental challenges of rejection due to having a criminal record; (b) employer rejection affects self-esteem and self-efficacy, leading to rejection avoidance, entrepreneurial mindset development, entrepreneurial ventures, and mentoring others in job acquisition skills and entrepreneurship; (c) preincarceration and incarceration experiences affect postincarceration experiences; and (d) prisonization affects social identity. This study may contribute to positive social change by informing counselors of the psychological needs of PIIs, the body of knowledge regarding theories of prisonization and self-efficacy, and advocacy groups that seek to affect legislation for initiatives to prevent recidivism.

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## Dedication

I am dedicating this study and dissertation to my father and brother who are no longer with us, Walter Washington II and Walter Washington III. I am also dedicating this dissertation to my mother, Annie Washington, who prayed for me throughout this process.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and show appreciation to my Chair, Dr. Gregory Hickman, and second committee member, Dr. Barbara Benoliel, for all the support and assistance in making this study come to fruition. I appreciate and thank you for all your time, effort, patience, and knowledge provided during the development of this dissertation. I would also like to thank my children and family for understanding my time constraints and providing their support. Without the support of my friends, family, and dissertation family, I would not have completed this task. I thank you with all my heart.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Researchers have endeavored to uncover factors that cause individuals to recidivate and have determined that one of those factors is the acquired mindset of prisoners in the adjustment to prison life, called *prisonization*, which affects socialization skills (Patzelt et al., 2014). Adaptations to prison life consist of social withdrawal for safety and inside offense prevention, hypervigilance to remain constantly on guard for hurt or harm, and conformity or submission to prison ingroups that harbor deviant behaviors and attitudes from prior lived experiences (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017; Shlosberg et al., 2018). Prison adaptations or prisonization affect societal reentry for previously incarcerated individuals (PIIs) by altering individuals' mindset to adapt to the prison culture (Martin, 2018; Patzelt et al., 2014). Prisonization, a criminal record, and a lack of education diminish PIIs' attempts at successful reentry and job interview opportunities, thereby contributing to underemployment or unemployment and leading to a lack of income that increases the chances of recidivism (Feist-Price et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2015; Petersen, 2016; Reed, 2015).

The *recidivism rate* (e.g., the rate of reoffending within 3 years) is helping to increase the incarceration rate in many countries, especially the United States, which has the highest incarceration rate in the world which is 25% of the world's population of prisoners (Ethridge et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Justice [USDOJ], 2014). Mitchell et al. (2016) stated that of the 2.2 million offenders released as of the end of 2014, approximately half of the released individuals would recidivate within 3 years. Shlosberg et al. (2018) discussed research that documented a recidivism rate for state prisoners of

66.8% within 3 years and 76.6% within 5 years. Individuals recidivate for various reasons that include financial issues from unemployment or underemployment, negative societal influences, and strains on the job market due to declining economies (Mears et al., 2014). The “War on Drugs” (WOD) era, racial and minority profiling, “truth in sentencing” (TIS) policies, and mental and co-occurring disorders accompanied by a criminal record are factors that continue to produce scenarios that increase recidivism (Hong et al., 2014; Polomarkakis, 2017, p. 400).

Legislation passed in the 1970s and 1980s to combat the illegal distribution of drugs, seemingly targeted individuals from economically disadvantaged communities and minorities, thereby causing the imprisonment of a disproportionate number of individuals from minority groups (Hong et al., 2014). Many offenders who come from economically disadvantaged communities and deviant groups (e.g., gang members) carry deviant and frustrated mindsets into prisons (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Boduszek & Debowska, 2017; Ethridge et al., 2014). Without the necessary reentry training after lengthy periods of unemployment, along with the factors mentioned above, many offenders may exhibit social withdrawal, relationship problems, and mental and physical health problems, which might lead to a loss of confidence or self-efficacy affecting the job acquisition process (Aysina et al., 2016; So, 2014). An individuals’ lack of confidence in their ability to secure the gainful employment necessary to meet release requirements and care for themselves and their families seems to be due to their unpreparedness for the challenges and obstacles of reentry and the effects of

prisonization, which transitional programs seek to address to prevent recidivism (Martin, 2018).

### **Background**

Prisons release more than 700,000 inmates annually (USDOJ, 2014). Nearly half of these PII's return to prison or jail within 3 years of release, increasing the recidivism rate and exacerbating the incarceration rate for the United States (USDOJ, 2014). The "Three Strikes and You're Out" and "Stop and Frisk" laws were additional pieces of legislation that helped to fill the prisons with a disproportionate number of minorities (Feist-Price et al., 2014; Polomarkakis, 2017, p. 400). The incarceration rate grew exponentially due to the harsh sentencing, the TIS policies, profiling, and arrest practices of the WOD era (Westcott, 2015). At any given time, the prison population was equivalent to at least 1.6 million, and the PII's on parole and probation (e.g., who needed employment) numbered nearly 5.6 million (Hong et al., 2014).

The vast number of released PII's have been additions to the nation's unemployed population who require employment for stability after release (Ethridge et al., 2014; USDOJ, 2014). Legislators in the United States have seemed to highlight consistent job growth in the nation (Zandi, 2016). Many of the jobs created within the last 10 years, however, have been low-paying, part-time, and seasonal jobs that have required many Americans to resort to holding more than one job for income stability (Torraco, 2016). For PII's, who have criminal records and often have antisocial attributes, employment challenges include finding employers who are receptive to hiring PII's and getting through the interview process (Ethridge et al., 2014; Griffith & Young, 2015).

An additional challenge highlighted by Derous et al. (2016) is that interview results constitute the most used determining factor in hiring an individual. The importance of a good interview presents a challenge for many PIIs due to their limited interview skills, education, and social skills to complete the process (Bartel, 2018; LePage et al., 2018; Mears et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2016). Torraco (2016) discussed changes in the job market and concerns for individuals looking for employment that affected feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. Although some researchers found an increase in retail and low-paying jobs over the years, Zandi (2016) stated that many higher paying jobs required additional education that many PIIs lacked (Furman, 2015; Reed, 2015).

Researchers have discussed the hardships of minorities in acquiring employment in the current job market and have highlighted the advantages of acquiring entrepreneurial training, which some transitional programs offer to increase participants' self-efficacy, social, and interaction skills (Ethridge et al., 2014; Harper-Anderson, 2019). Hsu et al. (2017) and Patzelt et al. (2014) discussed the addition of entrepreneurial training (a more recent program offering that many programs lacked) in transitional programs that potentially increased self-efficacy and innovative thinking to help PIIs to succeed in the transitional process. Transitional programs have sought to assist PIIs in acquiring practical and soft skills and have provided counseling to alter the mindset of PIIs for the successful acquisition of employment (Bartel, 2018; Ethridge et al., 2014; Visher et al., 2017).

Many inmates have remained unprepared for reentry to society due to shortages of funds for transition programs, optional program participation, inside offenses that prohibited program participation, or inadequate program offerings (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016). Many unprepared PII's who have lacked necessary job skills, training, or education have turned back to a life of crime, whether to meet basic needs for themselves and their families or in response to negative influences, leading to the rearrest of many PII's (Feist-Price et al., 2014; Reed, 2015). Reed (2015) discussed the effects of education on the recidivism rate and determined that allowing inmates access to educational advancement increased feelings of confidence and hope for employment. However, some researchers determined that a change in mindset and attitude was necessary due to many of the deviant attitudes and behaviors from PII's' pasts that were exacerbated by prison adaptations (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017).

Adaptations to prison life, referred to as *prisonization*, cause problems in rural communities when PII's become withdrawn or antisocial, due to the closeness of these communities (Ethridge et al., 2014). Even though advocates have fought for a Ban-the-Box initiative in states regarding access to criminal records, hiring managers in small, rural states have maintained prior knowledge of individuals' offenses, which has created additional challenges for PII's seeking employment (Griffith & Young, 2017). However, a hiring manager's knowledge of a PII's education acquisition, training, and community assistance and advocacy may provide incentives to hire an individual with a criminal record (Griffith & Young, 2017). The apparent effects of a lengthy prison sentence (e.g., seen as adaptations) require interventions in transitional programs to promote social and

life skills training, job training, and self-efficacy through education to combat the increasing recidivism rate (Patzelt et al., 2014). The need to find ways to assist PII's in the transition process has led others to address the problem of including the necessary service offerings in transitional programs to assist PII's in reaching stability upon release.

### **Problem Statement**

PII's face many challenges in the transitional process, including the effects of long-term prison sentences on the social and job interview skills necessary to acquire postincarceration employment (Martin, 2018). Many incarcerated individuals develop adverse psychological effects from lengthy prison sentences through a process called *prisonization* after completing a sentence of at least 5 years, which include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, distrust, antisocial behavior, and diminished confidence in their ability to transition successfully (Ethridge et al., 2014).

The adverse psychological effects of prisonization cause PII's to lose self-confidence, self-worth, and social skills needed for effective job interviews, which affects their self-efficacy and employment chances (Griffith & Young, 2017; Lopez-Aguado, 2016). Miller and Miller (2017) discussed employers' knowledge of psychological disorders along with a criminal history as further hindering employment prospects and decreasing self-efficacy. In addition, Bowler et al. (2018) discussed a PII's adverse psychological experiences that stem from preincarceration trauma or underprivileged circumstances, prison adaptation, and socially diminishing stigmas. The effects of prisonization that seem counter to the transition process include adherence to the criminal and gang mentalities of other inmates (Lopez-Aguado, 2016). Martin (2018) discussed

the long-term effects of adjustments to prison life or institutionalization and highlighted the enduring effects that hinder social interaction, which transitional program interventions attempt to offset.

Even though some transitional programs include job and life skills or work readiness training, as well as preparation for job interviews and referrals, Visher et al. (2017) concluded that the need for cognitive restructuring was more prevalent in the reduction of recidivism. When cognitive restructuring occurred before practical skills training, the resulting mindset changes affected motivation, determination, and confidence to apply and use the skills learned (Keena & Simmons, 2014; Visher et al., 2017). The importance of cognitive restructuring resides in the need to change the mindset of PII's due to the possible effects of prisonization, in order to build confidence and develop social skills for the job interview process and increase self-efficacy (Simourd et al., 2016). Hong et al. (2014) and Keena and Simmons (2014) discussed the need to provide cognitive restructuring or mindset changes to prepare the PII for social integration, social interaction and connectivity, and the employment process, including the job interview.

Due to the voluntary nature of many reentry services, incarcerated individuals opting out of these services, or punishment restrictions affecting individuals' participation, some correctional facilities failed to equip many incarcerated individuals with the skills, training, and cognitive development necessary for reentry (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016). Many programs lack funding to serve the nearly 700,000 incarcerated individuals who are released annually, which leaves many PII's lacking the

skills needed to secure employment for parole or probation requirements (Ethridge et al., 2014). Patzelt et al. (2014) discussed the development of self-efficacy through entrepreneurial training for building confidence for reentry success and stated a need to determine how training programs outside of prison assist in the development of self-efficacy to facilitate successful reentry.

Although the aforementioned research regarding the increased number of PIIs and challenges of adult PIIs when seeking employment illuminated important findings, I found no research that sought to understand adult PIIs' perceptions and experiences of the interview process after a lengthy prison sentence and intervention program participation. Given this, further research was warranted to understand the experiences and perceptions of adult PIIs regarding the interview process in the acquisition of employment after a lengthy prison sentence and intervention program participation to address documented problems from the effects of prisonization and diminished self-efficacy in a PII's quest for employment (Bowler et al., 2018; Ethridge et al., 2014; Miller & Miller, 2017; Patzelt et al., 2014).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this generic qualitative research design was to explore the experiences and perceptions of a PII after participation in a transitional program and before and after a job interview. The attempt to explore PIIs' perceptions of the job interview process stemmed from documented results concerning prisonization, preincarceration experiences, and diminished self-efficacy that affect the job-interviewing skills necessary to acquire employment and thereby decrease recidivism

(Martin, 2018; Miller & Miller, 2017; Patzelt et al., 2014). I wanted to explore what PIIs believed after the completion of a transitional program and preparing for a job interview, and what they believed after they had completed a job interview and acquired a job. The findings from this study will inform future transitional program development to help better prepare individuals leaving incarceration for job readiness.

### **Research Question**

What are the experiences and perceptions of the job interview process for an adult PII who served a prison sentence of 5 or more years and participated in a transitional program?

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

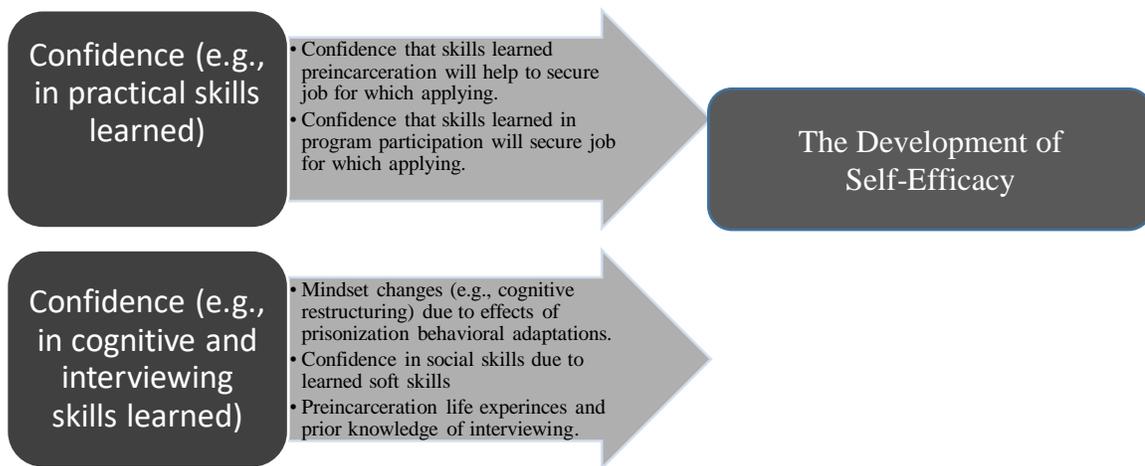
The theoretical lens in this study consisted of the self-efficacy theory presented by Bandura (1977) and the theory of prisonization introduced by “Clemmer in 1958 and Sykes in 1958 followed by additions to the theory by Wheeler in 1961” (Barak-Glantz, 1983, p. 129). Shlosberg et al. (2018) discussed the theory of prisonization as involving the adverse effects that a lengthy prison sentence has on a PII, which manifest as adaptations. The self-efficacy theory has a basis in two concepts that consist of the individual perception that specific responses (e.g., soft skills) produce a given outcome, and a given outcome is due to confidence in the efforts of personal actions (e.g., practical skills; Bandura, 1977; Bartel, 2018). The skills taught in intervention programs create inner confidence that the taught behavior and skills will produce the desired outcome (Bandura, 1977). If PIIs’ confidence in their personal ability to secure a job stems from attitude and cognitive behavior development, then the efficacy of expectation applies due

to cognition and not a learned skill (Bandura, 1977). The societal problem of recidivism has a basis in the theory of prisonization, in that a lengthy prison sentence leads to maladaptive behavior developed in prison that seems counterintuitive to social interaction and job interview skills for employment acquisition (Barak-Glantz, 1983).

I used the theories of self-efficacy and prisonization due to those theories' embedment in this study's purpose and research and interview questions (Bandura, 1977; Barak-Glantz, 1983). The questions used in the interview process aligned with the theoretical framework and concepts of prisonization and self-efficacy. The use of the theory of self-efficacy helped to clarify the need for the development of a PII's feelings of self-efficacy through intervention program participation to ensure effective job interview skills (Bandura, 1977; Ethridge et al., 2014).

**Figure 1**

*Theory of Self-Efficacy Pertinent to Confidence in the Interview Process*



The effects of prisonization affect socialization skills by possibly increasing the PII's symptoms of social withdrawal and decreasing self-worth and self-confidence that work counterintuitively with the need for verbal interaction and the confidence to complete a job interview (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017; Ethridge et al., 2014; Shlosberg et al., 2018). Program managers design transitional programs to offer counseling for cognitive restructuring and behavioral changes, practical and soft skills training that includes work readiness skills (e.g., resume building and interviewing skills; Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Bartel, 2018; Boduszek & Debowska, 2017; Ethridge et al., 2014). Some programs offer entrepreneurial training that provides PIIs with the skills to recognize opportunities in the market and capitalize on those opportunities to heighten socialization skills and gain additional confidence in locating and securing jobs (Patzelt et al., 2014). The use of program offerings to offset the effects of prisonization helps the PII to approach a job interview with some confidence (e.g., as seen in Figure 1) for a more successful interview process in theory, which was the basis and theoretical lens for this study.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used the generic qualitative research design for this study to provide a detailed and in-depth examination of the PIIs' experiences and perceptions (Weller et al., 2018). The participants consisted of PII volunteers after the completion of a transitional program, an interview, and job acquisition, when applicable. I collected data through semistructured interviews with probing and open-ended questions to allow the participants to provide rich, detailed data for analysis (Weller et al., 2018).

Before beginning the study, the managing director of an area reentry program received a request for permission to post a flyer to acquire volunteers for the study among the PII graduates of the transitional program. Included in the flyer was the participant criteria. The vetting of participants occurred during the initial call. Because posting the flyer at the program facility did not yield the necessary number of participants, I implemented an alternate plan that allowed for participant recruitment through an online posting of the flyer on a Facebook page to be further explained in Chapter 4. I conducted the initial and follow-up interviews by video, using Skype to acquire the data. Weller (2017) discussed the use of internet video interviews and highlighted the new frontier that video interviews present, even though face-to-face interviews are the main method for acquiring detailed qualitative data. I ensured that all participants had access to the appropriate video application before beginning the interviews, and I used the same video application for all interviews. I documented all details of all procedures in the process in a journal for transparency.

Regarding the age criteria for the study, Hong et al. (2014) stated that the age range for the majority of prisoners, parolees, and individuals on probation is between 18 and 34 years. Fowler and Kurlychek (2018) discussed the age ranges of youths tried as adults in the past and highlighted updated laws that disallowed convicted youths less than 17 years of age from receiving adult sentences. In addition, Shlosberg et al. (2018) and Ethridge et al. (2014) discussed findings that showed that age was a factor in the likelihood of recidivism, in that length of sentence and age of the PII had an effect on the chances of recidivism. Due to the requirement for my study that all participants had spent

at least 5 consecutive years in prison, as well as Hong et al.'s statement that the majority of parolees and PIIs on probation have an average base age of 18, I used an age range of 23 to 39 years. This age range added 5 years to the base age stated in Hong et al. to ensure that all study PIIs had served at least 5 consecutive years in an adult prison system before release while maintaining an age cap of below 40. Participant criteria indicated that to be included in this study, PIIs needed to have served at least a 5-year sentence in prison (as stated above), needed to have completed an intervention program to take part in the initial interview, and needed to have completed a job interview after the completion of the intervention program in order to take part in the follow-up interview. Each participant's release date needed to be no more than 1 year from the inception of the study, due to many transitional programs lasting 6 to 22 weeks, and the findings by Martin (2018) that some prisonization habits diminish in about 6 months, even though some last nearly 2 years (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Patzelt et al., 2014; Visher et al., 2017).

The purposeful and snowball sampling strategy allowed me to purposefully select participants who fit the criteria established within this study while assessing the recommendations of the participant volunteers (Ngozwana, 2017). *Purposeful sampling* is one of the defining components of the generic qualitative approach that ensures the application of detailed criteria in the selection of participants for transparency and increased transferability (Liu, 2016). All participants in this study were male. Each participant needed to have completed a transitional program to meet the criteria for the

initial interview and needed to have completed a job interview for the follow-up interview.

Regarding sample size, Ngozwana (2017) discussed the use of five participants using purposeful and snowball sampling in a study assessing the perceptions of PIIs from a correctional facility in Lesotho in Southern Africa. Eshareturi and Serrant (2018) discussed the use of eight purposely selected participants to determine the experiences of participants in receiving health care post incarceration. Chan and Boer (2016) conducted a study to determine the perceptions of PIIs and factors that influence successful reentry regarding finding employment and support in the reduction of recidivism with 12 purposely selected ex-incarcerated people. Given that data saturation occurs when no new themes develop, the number of participants is dependent on the length and number of interviews, probing questions, purpose of the study, and detailed data for maximum theme development (Kahlke, 2017; Weller et al., 2018). Based on previous studies on the perceptions of PIIs, I sampled four adult PIIs, and saturation occurred due to no new salient items being presented. During the initial analysis process, the categories aligned with the concepts outlined in the study. After the categorization of all data from the initial group of participants according to the outlined and developed concepts, no new theme development occurred; thus, thematic saturation occurred.

Semistructured interviews provided the primary data source for this study. A generic qualitative design generally consists of structured or semistructured questions (Percy et al., 2015). Due to this study being a qualitative and not a mixed-methods study, the use of semistructured questions provided an avenue for acquiring the data. I used

exploratory questions in the interview process to allow the participants to discuss their experiences and perceptions of the job interview process in order to collect rich and detailed data (Weller et al., 2018). The semistructured interview process allowed flexibility during the interviews for probes, prompts, and possible notations of additional questions to allow subsequent participants to voice perceptions and experiences on the developed concepts (Arsel, 2017; Weller et al., 2018). The documentation of interview notes took place during the interviews to help in the categorization of the data during analysis, along with the transcriptions of the interview recordings.

The analysis process consisted of *content analysis*, which is a method of interpreting data by examining the interviews and documents for coding and categorization of words, phrases, or themes (Biroscak et al., 2017; Nyamathi et al., 2016). Content analysis consists of conceptual analysis for amassing a count or tally of word or phrase frequency in the development of concepts and relational analysis for determining the relationship of adjoining words to key concepts, words, and phrases (e.g., the developed concepts; Colorado State University [CSU], 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). Conceptual analysis consists of eight steps that include determining the extent of the coding (i.e., coding words or phrases), determining the frequency or existence of concepts and ways to distinguish those concepts, and developing rules for coding and handling irrelevant information or codes, beginning the coding, and analyzing the data (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016).

This study used the concept of coding words and phrases and maintained a maximum of 10 concepts with the categorization of codes within those set concepts. The

study used relational analysis in the coding process and categorization according to the meanings that the codes represented. After interview transcription, the original plans to organize the data included the use of the NVivo software tool to compare the responses of the participants; determine word frequencies and search the text for key concepts, topics, and themes; and categorize that data for coding and theme development (Alameddine et al., 2016; Liu, 2016). However, due to the small sample size, intricacy of the data, and inexperience with the NVivo software, I manually organized the data using color coding in a Word document and two Excel spreadsheets to organize the codes; compare responses of the participants; determine word frequencies; search the text for key concepts, topics, and themes; and categorize the data for coding and theme development (explained in detail in the third chapter).

The following section is an elaboration of the eight steps in the conceptual analysis section of the content analysis strategy. The first step in conceptual analysis is to determine whether to code for words, phrases, or a combination of prevalent words and phrases in the data (Nyamathi et al., 2016). Coding for both words and phrases occurred in this study. The second step involves determining how to develop the number of concepts for the study. A researcher can have a predetermined set of concepts or allow the coding process to develop the concepts (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). The coding process is instrumental in the development of the concepts. The third step in the process is to determine whether to account for concept frequency or the existence of the process (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). Locating the concept (i.e., concept existence) does not require a count, even though concept frequency would allow for a

count of the frequency of the same concept (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). I used concept existence to locate concepts within the data and not maintain a count of the same concept. The fourth step defines how to develop concepts (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). Coding for words and forms of the root-words occurred, along with documenting phrases with like meanings to form categories to include in concept development (e.g., “education” or “educational” and “special needs” or “special learning needs”). The fifth step consists of defining the rules for coding the data, while the sixth step involves determining the steps for handling irrelevant codes, which I stored in an Excel spreadsheet, as explained in greater detail in the next chapter (Alameddine et al., 2016; CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). The seventh step is to code the data, while the eighth step is the analysis process (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). In the analysis process, precautionary measures are taken to maintain the integrity of the process, and the findings take precedence.

The bracketing of any preconceived ideas or knowledge about PIIs and recidivism was a necessity that required conducting thorough research on recidivism, self-efficacy, prisonization, and job interviewing skills while allowing the participants to voice perceptions of the phenomenon through nonleading questions (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I allowed the participants to examine the transcribed data for accuracy. The use of investigator triangulation ensured that positionality and ontology did not dilute the coding or analysis, along with acquiring permission from the PIIs to audio record the interviews to capture all details of the interview to increase credibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Allowing the participants to examine the transcribed

interviews (i.e., member check) for accuracy helped with credibility and validity (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The screening of the participants to ensure that each met the criteria for the study added validity to the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

The methods, approaches, and analysis process aligned and remained consistent with ethical considerations throughout the study so that the findings remained transferable and reliable (Ngozwana, 2018). Doyle and Buckley (2017) discussed the need for a researcher to take care to do no harm to participants and ensure that the participants understood that the process was voluntary and that refusal to answer any question that seemed offensive, stigmatizing, or traumatizing was acceptable (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). Doyle and Buckley (2017) also discussed the researcher's responsibility to ensure that each participant received information on the purpose and benefits of the study, provided an informed consent with adequate information, and collected no data before internal review board approval (Doyle & Buckley, 2017).

Elaborating on measures for privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity regarding information gathering, storing, and sharing before interviews puts participants at ease when sharing information (Ngozwana, 2018). Storing information on computers disconnected from the internet, eliminating identifying data to protect anonymity, and fully disclosing all sponsors or funders was necessary (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). Debriefing after the study was necessary to review the process of the study and ensure that the participants suffered no harm by returning the participants to a prestudy state (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Ngozwana, 2018).

## Definitions

The following is a list of terms key to the study:

- The term *financial issues* related to the added challenges faced by individuals due to the inability to secure sufficient income to maintain basic needs for the self and family, which leads some individuals to turn to illegal means of acquiring income, thereby recidivating (Feist-Price et al., 2014; Reed, 2015).
- The term *underemployment* refers to the income or wage gap (approximately 11%) that exists for PIIs relative to nonoffenders (i.e., individuals who lack a criminal record; Hong et al., 2015).
- *Economically disadvantaged communities* are those areas with high unemployment rates that are poverty stricken, with depleted or insufficient resources to meet the additional needs of transitioning PIIs (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Boduszek & Debowska, 2017; Ethridge et al., 2014).
- *Deviant groups* are gangs or groups of individuals who collectively practice or participate in criminal behavior (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017).
- The term *social interaction* in the context of this study refers to the ability to effectively communicate with others to convey necessary information in an effective, polite, and professional manner, which is necessary for successful interviews (Ethridge et al., 2014).
- *Practical skills* include specific job training or interviewing job search skills (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Visher et al., 2017).

- *Soft skills* include politeness in interaction and having an appropriate response to important and pertinent questions during the interview, with the ability to expand upon those responses (Bartel, 2018).

### **Assumptions**

One of the assumptions regarding self-efficacy is that for successful reentry, a PII needs to acquire self-efficacy for confidence during the interview and job acquisition process (Ethridge et al., 2014; Kasprzak, 2016). Patzelt et al. (2014) discussed the acquisition of self-efficacy by PIIs through entrepreneurial training that decreases the chances of recidivism. The concept of self-efficacy being a factor in exhibiting effective interviews is an implicit concept. Even though studies have shown that the acquisition of self-efficacy and other factors reduces recidivism, the concept of developing social skills that enhance self-efficacy and interviewing techniques necessary to secure employment has no demonstration history (Ethridge et al., 2014; Patzelt et al., 2014).

Investigating the concept of prisonization when seeking to explore a PII's perception of self-efficacy has an implied basis in acquiring socialization skills. Shlosberg et al. (2018) discussed prisonization and its effects, which include withdrawal and antisocial behavior that one would suppose would determine a person's level of self-confidence or self-efficacy. However, researchers have not proven that prisonization determines individuals' level of self-efficacy and have not determined whether the loss of socialization skills determines success in a job interview. The previously mentioned uncovered concepts provided the basis for this study for exploring PIIs' perception of self-efficacy for effective job interviews.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Additional researchers have found that programs that include entrepreneurial training tend to increase PII's self-efficacy, with positive results in reducing recidivism by changing the mindset of individuals, thereby positively increasing PII's self-esteem (Hsu et al., 2017; Patzelt et al., 2014). Independent and leadership thinking provide PII's with feelings of self-efficacy and the practical skills to seek opportunities in the community to subsidize low-paying jobs offered to ex-felons in the job market (Hsu et al., 2017; Patzelt et al., 2014). Transitional programs endeavor to equip the PII with the skills for a successful transition (Angell et al., 2014). The lack of, and in some cases, delay in substance abuse or mental health treatment services for released individuals with co-occurring diagnoses create scenarios where PII's lack the necessary treatment and cognitive restructuring in program offerings (Miller & Miller, 2017; Reed, 2015). Lopez-Aguado (2016) discussed the added frustrations of PII's returning to communities with a limited and strained job market accompanied by the stigma of a criminal record that further deteriorated the confidence and hopes of a PII in locating a job relative to the strain theory.

Without confidence in their ability to complete the interview process due to the adverse effects of prisonization as well as insecurities and stigmas arising from a criminal and mental health history, PII's experienced a lack of self-efficacy that produced a need for program intervention that included job and work readiness skills, cognitive restructuring, and interview skills (Griffith & Young, 2017; Shlosberg et al., 2018; Visher et al., 2017). Simourd et al. (2016) conducted a study to determine the effects of

programs that provide treatment for attitude changes and stated that programs that include attitude treatment caused reduction in the recidivism rate. The lack or omission of correctional facility or postrelease intervention programs, lack or delay in postrelease mental health services, frustrations of the labor market, and limited intervention services produced challenges for PIIs that inevitably decreased their social skills and increased the recidivism rate (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Ethridge et al., 2014; Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Miller & Miller, 2017).

The criteria for this generic qualitative study indicated that participating PIIs needed to have served at least a 5-year sentence in prison, completed an intervention program, and completed a job interview. Each participant's release date needed to be no more than 1 year from the inception of the study due to many transitional programs lasting 6 to 22 weeks, the effects of prisonization being more pronounced near the release date, and the need to acquire possible support for the theories discussed in the theoretical framework (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Martin, 2018; Visher et al., 2017). The PIIs had varying convictions and ages and consisted of male participants. Each participant had completed a transitional program to meet the criteria for the initial interview and a job interview for the follow-up interview.

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations of the study was the sampling strategy (i.e., snowball sampling), which was dependent on one participant's recommendation of other participants who fit the criteria for the study (Ngozwana, 2017). The societal stigma associated with having a criminal record deterred some PIIs from participating in the

study without the reassurance of safeguards for privacy (Griffith & Young, 2017). The challenge of protecting the privacy of the participants encompassed conducting the interviews in a private environment without interruptions, offering varying appointment times, and protecting the personal information and data of the participants (Ngozwana, 2018). Another limitation of this study was the possibility of a small sample size that limited the ability to stratify the sample by age, gender, conviction, and length of a prison sentence. A sample that more closely represents the population of PII's might increase transferability by the readers of the study to other contexts or samples (Percy et al., 2015). Providing rich, detailed data increased possible transferability (Percy et al., 2015; Weller et al., 2018).

One of the main limitations of the study related to the generic research design, which lacked the boundaries of other research designs. For instance, the grounded theory design allows researchers to develop theory from data analysis to explain a phenomenon better, while phenomenology allows researchers to understand the essence or underpinnings of a phenomenon that reveals internal experiences (Liu, 2016; Percy et al., 2015). The narrative design allows participants to tell a story of life experiences. A case study uses an interview of one individual or entity, business, or event by using different methods and analyzing several data sources (Liu, 2016; Percy et al., 2015). An ethnography design allows the researcher to integrate, participate in, and observe a particular culture to investigate the interconnectedness of that culture (Percy et al., 2015). When the topic of interest and question involve a focus on the individual's subjective beliefs, opinions, or experiences of an external phenomenon, and when there is a plethora

of available information on the general subject matter, a generic qualitative design is more appropriate than the previously mentioned designs (Percy et al., 2015).

Even though the generic qualitative design lacks the boundaries or stated guidelines of the other methods, the flexibility to use some of the approaches in the other methods is allowable (Kahlke, 2014). The use of a blend of other approaches might lead to “method slurring” or an ill-defined or nonspecific methodology that lessens the study’s credibility (Kahlke, 2014, p. 13; 2018). The remedy to the problem of borrowing methodologies from other methods is to ensure that all aspects and sections of the framework align, which is what this study does (Kahlke, 2014). However, detailing the process and creating rigor in the study was necessary to create validity (Liu, 2016; Percy et al., 2015).

Another issue encompassed the lack of theoretical bases for typical generic qualitative studies, which causes researchers to construe the approach as atheoretical and lacking a theoretical lens by which to narrow the focus of the supporting literature (Kahlke, 2014). The use of the theories of prisonization and self-efficacy provided a theoretical lens within the conceptual framework by which to guide the literature review and supporting literature within this study. The use of a theoretical lens borrows from the methodology of phenomenology (Kahlke, 2014; Percy et al., 2015).

### **Significance**

The significance of this generic qualitative research study resides in its potential to advance knowledge regarding PIIs and the job interview process in the acquisition of employment after participation in a transitional program, due to researchers’ findings that

determined that employment acquisition is a factor in the reduction of recidivism (Ethridge et al., 2014). The findings may affect legislation like the Second Chance Act of 2007, which received revisions in 2015 to extend through 2020 due to findings from empirical studies (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Congress.gov, 2015). The study findings may inform counselors who provide cognitive restructuring within transitional programs to offset the effects of prisonization due to lengthy prison sentences (Angell et al., 2014).

This study may advance knowledge regarding PIIs and the interview process after participation in a transitional program, which researchers discovered as a determining factor in the reduction of recidivism (Ethridge et al., 2014). Program managers might consider assessing all program participants for the acquisition of self-efficacy to ensure the effectiveness and continual improvement of program offerings (Shlosberg et al., 2018). A PII's acquisition of self-efficacy is a seemingly necessary component of the effort to ensure a PII's mindset change, which includes determination, creativity, innovation, and confidence for a better job interview experience (Hong et al., 2014; Hsu et al., 2017; Patzelt et al., 2014). If a PII acquires the skills and training to build confidence, interviewing, and work-readiness skills, the community benefits, and the PII becomes an asset (Griffith & Young, 2017). Scholar-practitioners develop programs to benefit others in the effort to effect social change due to skills and knowledge acquired (Walden University, 2015).

Scholar-practitioners seek to effect social change through advocacy and program development for the disadvantaged and disenfranchised (Walden University, 2015).

Advocates for social change view the use of a PII's criminal history as a brand that diminishes job opportunities, highlighting the need for legislative initiatives to offset those challenges (Griffith & Young, 2017). Researchers see a criminal record as exacerbating the adverse effects of prisonization, further limiting a PII's job opportunities by diminishing self-efficacy (Ethridge et al., 2014). The findings from this study add to the body of knowledge on the theories of self-efficacy and prisonization and support advocacy efforts for more effective programs to prevent recidivism (Bandura, 1977; Barak-Glantz, 1983).

### **Summary**

With the large number of offenders released each year, the need exists to allow PIIs to describe their experiences and perceptions of the interview process after release from a lengthy prison sentence in the quest for employment, due to the challenges of a criminal record and effects of prisonization that produce antisocial behavior (Griffith & Young, 2017; Shlosberg et al., 2018). The needs of the PII upon release from prison include job and work readiness skills training, cognitive restructuring, access to mental and physical health resources, and opportunity for employment to offset the chances of recidivism (Shlosberg et al., 2018; Visher et al., 2017). However, many transitional programs exclude some offenders or PIIs, lack sufficient funding to serve large numbers of annual releases, or lack effective program offerings (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Visher et al., 2017). Given the need for a PII to acquire employment upon release and the implied need for self-efficacy for successful interviews in the process of

acquiring employment, the need exists to explore PIIs' perceptions and experiences after participation in and completion of an intervention program and a job interview.

The theoretical framework of this study consisted of the theories of prisonization and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Barak-Glantz, 1983). The use of content analysis provided the process for analyzing the data acquired by the bounded generic qualitative design (CSU, 2019). The significance of the study included adding to the body of knowledge regarding recidivism while informing counselors and intervention program developers of the needs of offenders and PIIs in the transition process. The findings within the study may also inform advocates about the additional needs of PIIs to ensure adequate socialization skills for effective interviews to acquire employment. In the process of developing the study to explore the perceptions of PIIs regarding the job interview and job acquisition, the need existed to conduct an exhaustive search for resources in the area of recidivism, prisonization, and the acquisition of self-efficacy, along with the factors included in each concept and phenomenon addressed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

As PIIIs seek employment to meet personal and family needs, many encounter barriers and challenges that lead to frustration. Transitional programs attempt to offset such obstacles by offering practical and soft skills training and promoting attitude changes to assist in the interview process (Bartel, 2018; LePage et al., 2018; Mears et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2016). Visher et al. (2017) discussed the unsuccessful attempts of transitional programs to prepare PIIIs for reentry and employment acquisition, which can create unrealistic expectations of societal reintegration. The previously mentioned issue of unprepared PIIIs for reentry, provide the overall problem that program directors, legislators, and stakeholders attempt to offset by finding ways to create better services for PIIIs in the transitional process.

The primary purpose of this study was to allow PIIIs to describe their perceptions and experiences of the interview process after participating in a transitional program, as well as after completing a job interview. One of the subsequent purposes was to document the feelings, perceptions, and experiences of PIIIs after employment acquisition to determine whether their perceptions changed after completing an interview and acquiring employment, when applicable. In considering the purpose for conducting this study, I observed that the need existed to address the challenges and obstacles faced by PIIIs upon societal reentry that employment seems to offset.

One of the reasons that probation and parole programs require employment for PIIIs is that research findings have shown a decrease in recidivism when PIIIs acquire and maintain employment (Farabee et al., 2014). Lopez-Aguado (2016) and Martin (2018)

discussed the needs of the PII, which included sufficient income to maintain personal needs and the needs of the family. When a PII lacks needed income, the chances of the offender reverting to deviant behavior to acquire necessary income increase (Swensen et al., 2014). The challenges faced by the PII, which include a criminal record, lack of education, racial biases, and prison adaptation behaviors, diminish the PII's employment hopes, affecting self-efficacy as the PII has inadequate preparation for reentry (Griffith & Young, 2017; Hong et al., 2014; Patzelt et al., 2014; Reed, 2015). In addition, most employers require a job interview, for which transitional programs attempt to prepare the PII to offset the effects of prisonization and increase self-efficacy (Derous et al., 2016; Hsu et al., 2017; Shlosberg et al., 2018). As the previously mentioned challenges affect employment hopes, another challenge involves a lack of resources in the communities to which PII's return.

Resource acquisition is a seemingly necessary component of successful reentry. Ethridge et al. (2014) discussed the strain on the economy that occurs when penal institutions release offenders to small, interconnected, and economically deprived communities. Small or rural communities have limited resources, and when everyone in a community knows one another, a PII's background is a preceding factor that presents a challenge to employment or reaching the interview stage (Ethridge et al., 2014; Miller & Miller, 2017). Martin (2018) discussed the release of PII's to disadvantaged communities as causing additional strain and frustration for PII's in locating employment, housing, and healthcare. In addition, Lopez-Aguado (2016) discussed the effects of prisonization (i.e., prison adaptation) as causing problems with PII reentry due to prison gangs and other

influences on social identity in prison that normalize criminal activity and require a change in mindset. Transitional programs attempt to prepare the PII to acquire employment and socialization skills and assist with the limitations of available resources (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Visher et al., 2017). The need for additional resources to assist the PII is an apparent issue that federal and state legislators acknowledge.

The need for additional program funding and better transitional programs has become a prominent factor in recent legislative actions for PIIs. Legislation crafted in 2008 provided funding for transitional programs through the Second Chance Act (SCA) to assist with illegal substance abuse and mental health, practical and job skills, social and familial supports, and mentorships (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016). Amasa-Annang and Scutelnicu (2016) provided an evaluative study of SCA-funded programs in three states (Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi) and determined that the two states that received the most funding (Georgia and Mississippi) showed a reduction in the recidivism rate. Funding for transitional programs to assist PIIs in the development of skills for the transition and interview process was increased to help in the reduction of the recidivism rate. One of the concerns for PIIs was inadequate program offerings, even though nonparticipation in the existing programs designed to prepare PIIs for reentry added to the number of PIIs who were unprepared for reentry (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Visher et al., 2017).

Program offerings prepare PIIs for the stigmas and challenges associated with having a criminal record, as employment opportunities for PIIs seem limited due to

employers' refusal to hire individuals with a criminal record (Griffith & Young, 2017). Shlosberg et al. (2018) highlighted the need for programs that include cognitive restructuring or mindset or attitude changes to address the effects of prison adaptation in order to prepare PIIs for societal reentry. Lack of education, employment experience, and preincarceration experiences are additional challenges to acquiring employment, which require further elaboration (Reed, 2015; Shlosberg et al., 2018; So, 2014).

The following chapter includes an overview of the literature review strategy used to locate research articles to provide evidentiary support to the study, an outline of the study's theoretical foundation using the theories of prisonization and self-efficacy, and an exhaustive review of the literature. The literature review section has 10 subsections. The first subsection contains a review of the literature on preincarceration experiences of PIIs. The second subsection contains a discussion of prisonization, beginning with an overview of the history of prisons, followed by the effects of prisonization on incarcerated individuals and PIIs. The third subsection includes literature on self-efficacy and self-efficacy's impact on a PII relative to the job interview process. The fourth subsection is a discussion of the use of cognitive restructuring in relation to mindset and attitude change treatments in transitional programs. The fifth subsection contains a discussion of the challenges faced by PIIs upon release from prison and reentry into society. The sixth subsection provides an overview of transitional programs to prepare the PII for reentry. The seventh subsection provides information on educational benefits of such programs for PIIs and some of the offerings of these programs. The eighth subsection includes information on the interview process, interview expectations, and possible effects of the

process on the PII. The ninth subsection includes some cultural considerations for program offerings for the PII, followed by the final subsection, which provides a summation of the chapter with closing statements.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In the attempt to perform an exhaustive search for all articles pertaining to previously incarcerated individuals and the interview process, I searched the following databases: PsycINFO, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Cochrane Methodology Register, Communication & Mass Media Complete, Computers & Applied Sciences Complete, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), Education Source, ERIC, GreenFILE, Health and Psychosocial Instruments, Hospitality & Tourism Complete, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts, MAS Ultra—School Edition, MEDLINE with Full Text, OpenDissertations, Political Science Complete, Primary Search, PsycARTICLES, Public Administration Abstracts, Regional Business News, Research Starters—Education, Social Work Abstracts, and SocINDEX with Full Text. I narrowed the search results to include only peer-reviewed articles and articles within the last 5 years. I used the following keywords to locate relevant articles for the study: “job interview,” “offenders,” “ex-offenders,” “incarcerated individuals,” “prison,” “felons,” “reentry programs,” “transition programs,” “prisonization,” “self-efficacy,” “challenges,” “criminal background,” “criminal record,” “education programs in prison,” “prison transitional programs,” “cognitive restructuring for offenders,” “cognitive restructuring for ex-offenders,” “mindset changes,” “attitude changes,”

“criminals inmates,” “rehabilitation,” “ex-felons,” “postincarceration,” “job growth,” and “United States.” I used the cited reference search method to locate additional articles by looking at the cited articles within older and original articles to locate additional and later articles relevant to the subject of interest (Linder et al., 2015).

In the initial search for information, the terms “felons,” “ex-felons,” “ex-offenders,” “offenders,” and “inmates” revealed all information pertinent to individuals who fit in that category. After the initial search, the addition of keywords to subsequent lines in the search engine narrowed the search according to the concepts within the study, which included the following: “prisonization,” “self-efficacy,” “interviews,” and “cognitive treatment.” The use of the cited reference search method helped in acquiring other current articles on the subject. For example, Griffith and Young (2017) cited and referenced Petersen (2016) regarding the ethical concerns in the use of criminal records by employers. In another example, Patzelt et al. (2014) cited an article on the theory of self-efficacy in “Bandura (1987; 2001)” (p. 597). After researching the previously mentioned articles, a preceding article on the theory of self-efficacy by Bandura (1977) provided a foundational definition of the theory.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

One of the theoretical lenses used for this study has a basis in the theory of self-efficacy, which presents two distinct aspects of the concept (Bandura, 1977). The first concept indicates that an individual acquires confidence in the ability to accomplish a goal due to taught skills, as well as confidence that the skills taught are sufficient to meet a goal that requires those taught skills (Bandura, 1977). The second aspect of self-

efficacy involves the inherent knowledge and ability of the individual that produces personal confidence and the restructuring of cognitive processing or positive thinking that produces confidence (Bandura, 1977). Some of the transitional programs in prisons teach job skills along with job acquisition skills (e.g., resume preparation and interviewing skills), which help the PII to acquire confidence in the skills learned to assist in the acquisition of employment (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Visher et al., 2017).

The practical skills (e.g., plumbing, carpentry, or sewing) taught in some penal institutions provide inmates with skills necessary to acquire and maintain jobs once released (Ngozwana, 2017). Other program offerings use cognitive restructuring to change the negative or deviant thinking and behavior acquired by the PII through life experiences and adaptation to prison life to assist the PII in the transitional process and help in employment acquisition (Visher et al., 2017). Visher et al. (2017) presented their study's findings as indicating a need for cognitive restructuring before allowing exposure to more practical skills, while Hong et al. (2014) suggested a need for a lifestyle change. Helping individuals become self-sufficient provides an avenue for socialization and the skills necessary for reentry stability (Hong et al., 2014). Due to adaptations to prison life that produce hypervigilance, withdrawn behavior, distrust, and PTSD symptomology along with deviant behaviors due to socioeconomic environments and policing practices, some programs include cognitive restructuring (Ethridge et al., 2014; Visher et al., 2017). The concept and theory of prisonization encompass adaptations to prison life or norms due to a need to ensure safety, compliance with prison regulations, and inclusion into prison ingroups, which explain PIIs' criminal behavior and recidivism (Boduszek &

Debowska, 2017; Shlosberg et al., 2018). The longer the prison sentence, the greater the depth of prisonization and chances of reoffending (Shlosberg et al., 2018).

Inmates withdraw and become isolated from other inmates for safety and to eliminate internal violations (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017; Lerner, 2017; Martin, 2018). Some individuals who enter penal institutions with deviant behaviors establish gangs and groups on the inside of penal institutions (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017; Simourd et al., 2016). Individuals join ingroups in order to benefit from the groups' protection, social support, and identification (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017). Boduszek and Debowska (2017) discussed the acquisition of self-esteem through inclusion in ingroups with which inmates and PIIs identify. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to attach themselves to groups for social inclusion and acquire an identity based on the group identity, which produces a need for PII cognitive restructuring to alleviate the prisonization in-group identity (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017). The term *institutionalization* refers to adapting to or becoming accustomed to institutional regulations that require strict obedience and produce dependence on the system for food, clothing, and instruction, which leads to increased frustration upon release due to an inability to cope and unmet institutional dependencies (Martin, 2018). Adapted prison behaviors become maladaptive behaviors upon release, when the need exists to acquire employment that requires social and communication skills (Martin, 2018). However, other theories provide further insight into the development of social skills for successful reentry.

Other theories that may be relevant to the topic of this study include social functional theory, which encompasses the collaborative efforts of social supports and

entities in efforts to assist the PII in societal reentry and provide the necessary support for stability (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016). The strain theory provides a possible explanation of behavior, actions, or reactions to frustrating stimuli (e.g., the stigma of a criminal history that exacerbates unemployment) during societal reentry that lead to recidivism (Mears et al., 2014). Mears et al. (2014) developed a quantitative study based on the strain theory that examined the effects of economically deprived communities which caused PII frustrations due to added barriers to acquiring needed employment. Mitchell et al. (2016) used the strain theory as a basis for a study to determine the effects of prison visitation on recidivism. The authors determined that face-to-face visitation had the most significant effect of diminishing the anger and frustrations of being separated from familial and social supports (Mitchell et al., 2016). The previously mentioned theories offer further explanation of the effects of social interaction and maintaining social supports while incarcerated, even though the theories of prisonization and self-efficacy provided the foundation for this study.

## **Literature Review**

### **Prisonization**

Lengthy prison sentences cause inmates to adapt to the regulations, restrictions, environment, and culture of prison life (i.e., prisonization; Shlosberg et al., 2018). Martin (2018) described prisonization as adaptation to prison culture as defined by “Clemmer (1940)” that affects postincarceration behavior, which Shlosberg et al. (2018) stated was behavior learned from other prisoners (p. 1082). Integration into the prison culture and way of living transforms an individual’s way of thinking and behaving in the same

manner as an immigrant conforms to the culture of a newly entered country with a difference in culture and way of life (Martin, 2018). Various factors determine the extent of cultural adaptations of the incarcerated individual, including sentence length, institution, and release conditions (Martin, 2018). However, to better understand the concept of prisonization, a look at the history of the prison system seems necessary.

### ***The History of Prison***

The history of the prison system goes back many centuries, with a background far different from the prison systems of today (Buntman, 2019; Westcott, 2015). Buntman (2019) described imprisonment as a form of institutional repression that takes away the freedom of the individual to acquire total control over that person. Before the turn of the 18th century (i.e., in colonial times), prisons or jails held individuals whom governments viewed as political and religious dissidents and debtors (e.g., individuals who lacked the means to pay debts; Barnes, 1921; Buntman, 2019; Rubin & Reiter, 2018; Westcott, 2015). Barnes (1921) stated that in the 18th century, prisons or jails were institutions designed for corporal punishment that were influenced by the Quakers, a religious society. Buntman described the prison system and punishment as a form of colonialist control which ensured that individuals conformed to the developmental rules and regulations of the forming colony.

Once sentenced and incarcerated, the governing authorities considered the individual as a body to control and not as an individual with rights or privileges (Buntman, 2019). The jails held individuals until trial and sentencing, which could include death, flogging (i.e., being whipped), torture, mutilation, or hard labor at a

workhouse or exiled area (Barnes, 1921). The early 18th century brought change, due to activists, that led to the development of prisons to diminish the corporal punishment of all prisoners and establish the first prison systems (Barnes, 1921; Rubin & Reiter, 2018; Westcott, 2015). For instance, the first prison in the United States, started in Pennsylvania, had harsh penalties for prisoners that included beatings, starvation, and solitary confinement (Barnes, 1921; Westcott, 2015). The development of the New York prisons brought new challenges to maintaining any form of social behavior by requiring that all prisoners work, eat, and function in silence, with strict adherence to rules of control to offset beatings for noncompliance (Barnes, 1921; Westcott, 2015). The New York model spread throughout the nation and the world, with advocates touting the benefits of total control and silence without regard for the trauma endured by the inmates or effects of solitude and nonsocial behavior on societal reentry, which required socialization skills (Barnes, 1921; Westcott, 2015). Buntman (2019) highlighted the harsh treatment of political prisoners as leading to the development of terrorist groups such as ISIL, ISIS, and al-Qaida, for which hostility about such treatment fueled recruitment.

Individuals deemed as the worst criminals (e.g., mass murders or cannibals) received sentences to penal colonies or super maximum-security prisons like Alcatraz which was a maximum-security facility on an island over two miles off the coast of California or the prison established in Arizona for super maximum security (Rubin & Reiter, 2018). Maximum and super security prisons were facilities for individual isolation and solitary confinement to ensure total social isolation for more than 22 hours a day with horrid conditions like the penal institutions in Colorado and Arizona in the early 1900s

(Rubin & Reiter, 2018). Prisons and penal colonies were places of punishment and not rehabilitation (Westcott, 2015). If the sentence included hard labor, the individual might have spent time on the chain gang that helped build the roads of the south or in workhouses with hard labor under maximum security supervision (Westcott, 2015).

The early nineteenth century brought prison reforms due to the perseverance of reformists and activists, the public outcry, and prisoner revolts due to the severity of prisoner treatment which caused many deaths and brutal treatment of prisoners at the hands of overseers, wardens, and correctional staff (Buntman, 2019; Westcott, 2015). Westcott (2015) discussed the prisoner rebellion at Attica, New York, in 1971 that led to the Supreme Court decision to afford prisoners the right to exercise, adequate food, and education led to changes in that facility.

The need to prepare the prisoner for reentering society became apparent due to many released prisoners that no longer knew how to function in a world which required socialization instead of silence, control, and strict regulations that governed, eating, sleeping, recreation, and work (Rubin & Reiter, 2018). Rubin and Reiter (2018) discussed the adverse effects of solitary confinement on the psychological well-being of the prisoner and the steps taken to reform and reframe the prison system. The definition of *solitary confinement* (i.e., spurred by the treatment and efforts of Nelson Mandela by the United Nations in 2015) that included the seclusion from any social contact for 22 hours in a day for more than 15 consecutive days helped to set a guideline for confinement (Rubin & Reiter, 2018). The Nelson Mandela Rules, named after a South African political leader who spent a lengthy time in prison due to political beliefs, helped to foster

better treatment of prisoners (Buntman, 2019). Westcott (2015) highlighted the reformed practices of Norway, Denmark, and Germany which provided avenues for the prisoners to remain connected to family and social supports by allowing weekday and weekend passes, family living quarters, and liberal visitation practices. The practices of the previously mentioned countries allowed the prisoners to maintain socialization practices and connections while incorporating other rehabilitation efforts which made societal re-integration less daunting with a more prepared PII (Westcott, 2015). The transitional programs incorporated in the prison system were a step in the right direction yet lacked the necessary components to fully erase the years of *institutionalization* which is the compliance and adaptation to the culture and regulation of an institution or effects of prisonization which remain a current problem (Martin, 2018; Rubin & Reiter, 2018; Visher et al., 2017; Westcott, 2015).

### ***Examining the Concept of Prisonization***

Penal institutions incarcerate individuals and lack correctional and rehabilitation efforts to prepare the incarcerated individual for transitioning into society, adequately (So, 2014). Some of the effects of incarceration might include increased frustrations, institutionalization, mental and physical health deterioration, and diminished social skills that affect postincarceration behavior (Shlosberg et al., 2018). Martin (2018) described the effects of prisonization as a transformative process for the incarcerated individual that encompasses the mind and the body which includes prison tattoos, missing teeth, hypervigilance, and prison habits. However, LePage et al. (2018) provided a study to determine the effects of a lengthy prison sentence on employment acquisition when the

PII had additional challenges (e.g., substance abuse and mental illnesses) and found that a lengthy prison sentences did not lessen the number of applications submitted by PIIs nor the offers for employment. However, the employers considered gaps in employment in the elimination of the PII from acquiring an interview due to preliminary stipulations produced eliminations in selection, even though the length of sentence produced an insignificant effect on employment offers once interviewed (LePage et al., 2018).

Researchers use the definition of prisonization, in theory, to explain the criminal behavior of the PII due to the prison adaptations that affect recidivism (Shlosberg et al., 2018). Ngozwana (2017) stated that inmates identify with other inmates and use other inmates for support in support groups and mentorships to help in the coping stages of imprisonment. When incarceration severs an inmate's social and familial connections, reintegration becomes difficult which gives credence to the need for support through program services to help reconnect the PII after release with a support system (Ngozwana, 2017). Martin (2018) discussed the institutional habits that form while in prison that remain as habits after release. In a qualitative study by Martin, PIIs discussed the eating habits that continued after release that included food cravings (e.g., noodles) and eating while standing that seemed to be ingrained habits. In Martin (2018), PIIs discussed developing an obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) by repeatedly cleaning the cells and organizing items in the room to pass the time and maintain a small living area or cell (e.g., six feet by eight feet in size). Inmates became dependent on the institution for necessities, clothing, and food and adapt to the regulations and the

restrictions of the institution and the interaction habits with other inmates (Martin, 2018; Shlosberg et al., 2018).

Inmate interactions vary and are dependent on the individual's prior life experiences, feelings of safety, and a need to avoid inside offenses (Ethridge et al., 2014; Shlosberg et al., 2018; Yardley et al., 2015). Some individuals enter penal institutions with a background in gang activity that leads to a gang ingroup mentality (Larner, 2017). Inmates join certain ingroups for the group's protection, safety, and identity and acquire a heightened sense of self-esteem from membership identity (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017). However, inmates become hypervigilant due to a need to watch surroundings for fear of safety and distrust among inmates due to not knowing whom to trust which leads to diminished socialization skills (Martin, 2018). Mitchell et al. (2016) discussed the connection with family members and social supports that tend to reduce recidivism and decrease the effects of prisonization by maintaining social connections. Shlosberg et al. (2018) discussed the findings by other researchers which showed that a person's age is a determining factor in the effects of prisonization and the rate of recidivism. The older a PII at the time of release lessens the chances of reoffending, which alludes to the possible positive effect of lengthy sentences (Shlosberg et al., 2018). However, the effects of prisonization have the potential to diminish self-worth and self-efficacy when attempting to accomplish tasks like a job interview that is necessary for stability after release from prison (Heinemann et al., 2016; So, 2014).

### **The Acquisition of Self-Efficacy**

Having confidence in one's ability and knowledge to accomplish a specific task is a helpful attribute when approaching an interview and interviewer (Aysina et al., 2016). When an individual acquires sufficient knowledge about the interview process and has the skills necessary to do the job, the confidence level of the individual increases, which increases the chances of securing the job (Aysina et al., 2016). Programs to increase the knowledge of the PII (e.g., education courses, cognitive restructuring, and skills and job training) create the confidence necessary to approach a job interview with a sufficient amount of confidence in self-knowledge and skills for a successful interview and employment hope (Ethridge et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2014; So, 2014). So (2014) discussed the loss of self-efficacy and self-worth and low self-concept of a case study participant that led to added frustrations and skepticism in the ability to acquire employment and for successful social reintegration, which caused the PII to return to drugs and criminal activity. In addition, Hong et al. (2014) added that employment acquisition was a significant factor in determining the amount of time before a possible rearrest that required mindset changes and long-term intervention effects.

Some states restrict job opportunities on professional levels (e.g., finance or healthcare) and federal, state, and municipal jobs for PIIs with felony convictions (So, 2014; Solinas-Saunders et al., 2015). Hong et al., (2014) and Swensen et al. (2014) discussed the diminished job opportunities for PIIs due to criminal backgrounds that included low wage jobs with insufficient income to sustain a family that caused a PII to reoffend. Hong et al. added that the effects of low wages add PIIs to the working poor

and welfare recipients in the community. However, an increase in wages leads to improvements in social behavior that produces a decrease in the recidivism rate (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016).

A recent addition to program offerings called entrepreneurial training tends to provide the individual with an increase in self-efficacy and salary increase opportunities due to small business creation for additional income or building a lucrative business to hire others (Ethridge et al., 2014). Conroy and Weiler (2016) discussed necessity entrepreneurship that comes from an individual's need to eliminate personal poverty, increase income, and create jobs for the self and others. Patzelt et al. (2014) discussed *entrepreneurial training* in transitional programs that helps to teach a PII to look for opportunities in the market and capitalize on those opportunities to create small businesses. The entrepreneurial training included training in communication, socialization skills, persistence, and tenacity that produced the cognitive restructuring necessary to increase self-efficacy, diminish the effects of prisonization, and increase employment chances (Patzelt et al., 2014). Patzelt et al. (2014) found that PIIs exhibited more perseverance in finding jobs and confidence in abilities (e.g., self-efficacy) to obtain employment due to the training received, even though some researchers contradict the need for self-efficacy in acquiring employment.

In a study that contradicted the need for self-efficacy, Hong et al. (2014) provided a study to determine if ex-offenders with higher self-efficacy or self-esteem have a higher level of employment hope and if those with higher employment hope have a higher level of self-esteem, self-worth, and self-motivation. The results of the study by Hong et al.

(2014) showed positive results for self-esteem when employment hope existed and no significant results for self-efficacy (Hong et al., 2014). However, Boduszek and Debowska (2017) discussed the acquisition of self-esteem from the identity developed while incarcerated due to the effects of prisonization and ingroup acceptance and participation. Certain ingroups in prison mirror outside groups or gangs with deviant behavior yet serve as a form of family unit that allows PIIs to band together for protection, strength, and power which comes from numbers and togetherness (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017). When a PII identifies with a specific group, the individual acquires the ingroup identity, and self-esteem stems from that group identity, whether positive or deviant (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017). Determining from what source the self-esteem stems and the need for cognitive restructuring to ensure positive self-esteem for employment hope and PII self-efficacy for a more successful and productive interview process is a consideration for program offerings (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017; Patzelt et al., 2014; So, 2014).

### **Discussion of the Need for and Use of Cognitive Restructuring**

Simourd et al. (2016) discussed the criminal attitudes and criminal peers that influence the behaviors of incarcerated individuals and the premise that therapeutic interventions affect behaviors and attitude changes. Previous research found that incarcerated individuals showed a 10% reduction in recidivism due to participation in therapeutic interventions (Simourd et al., 2016). Visser et al. (2017) discussed the research that found that cognitive-behavioral intervention programs, along with drug treatment programs and education, benefited the incarcerated individual and showed

significant findings. In addition, Simourd et al. (2016) developed a study to evaluate the effectiveness of a program in reducing recidivism by analyzing pretreatment and posttreatment data and showed that the programs designed to change criminal attitudes and the effects of prisonization lead to the development of PII positive mindsets and lowered the recidivism rate. Researchers highlighted that intervention programs need to determine the risk level, learning abilities, and criminal identity, which when the programs included the suggested guidelines, a 30% reduction in recidivism occurred (Simourd et al., 2016). Inmates that receive services according to needs and risk assessment stand a better chance of positive outcomes (Visher et al., 2017). However, many of the incarceration programs lack treatment for attitude changes and cognitive behavior therapy (Simourd et al., 2016). Visher et al. (2017) stated that researchers ascertained that programs which include needs and risk assessments, cognitive-behavioral treatment, addiction treatment, and education for incarcerated individuals show a larger effect size and more significant findings.

Programs exist that make cognitive treatment (e.g., direct treatment) a priority while other programs treat cognitive therapy for criminal attitudes secondary to practical skills (e.g., indirect treatment; Simourd et al., 2016). The findings from the study by Visher et al. (2017) supported previous findings that showed a significantly positive effect on decreasing recidivism when the incarcerated individual received treatment to alter cognitive thinking. The use of cognitive-behavioral and drug addiction treatment and education creates the possibility for the PII entering society with a mindset and attitude change with the ability to desist from criminal influences and behavior (Simourd

et al., 2016; Visher et al., 2016). Even though the need for mindset changes seem apparent, other factors require consideration when determining the extent or depth of the PII's mindset.

### **Preincarceration Experiences**

Preincarceration experiences are experiences that affected the PII before incarceration (e.g., poverty and gang involvement or exposure) which seemed to influence or have an effect on the behaviors of the incarcerated individual and the PII (Bowler et al., 2018). Simourd et al. (2016) discussed the attitudes which lead to criminal behavior that stemmed from the preincarceration criminal influences which caused the incarcerated individual to harbor criminal and antisocial attitudes. Minimal or no prior work experience added to the problems of the postincarcerated challenges of PII's that nonparticipation in transitional programs exacerbated due to no exposure to additional education, life and job skills training, or sessions for cognitive restructuring (So, 2014).

The overlooked factors of preincarceration instability (e.g., due to depleted or deprived community economies) and minority racial discrimination affected recidivism chances (So, 2014). Heinemann et al. (2016) discussed the preincarcerated circumstances of some PII females which revealed that addictions, mental health issues, employment and wage inequality, victimization, and family responsibilities led some females to criminal behavior. Shlosberg et al. (2018) discussed preincarceration experiences and noted that those experiences defined the individual character and stated that the effects of prisonization are an extension of existing attitudes and personal characteristics, even though the effects of prisonization seemed temporary. Martin (2018) discussed the

probability of hypervigilance stemming from exposure to street violence before incarceration that imprisonment exacerbated. Individuals that connect with or remain near others that perform criminal acts with criminal mindsets and attitudes develop like attitudes and mindsets (Shlosberg et al., 2018).

When deviant and criminal behavior begin in childhood, some programs attempt to offset those behaviors even though many youths fail to benefit from those attempts (Simourd et al., 2016). The antisocial behaviors and attitudes of individuals fostered isolation from positive influences to solidify further connectivity to the criminal-minded groups with like attitudes and behaviors (Larner, 2017; Simourd et al., 2016). Deming (2017) discussed a need to instill or teach the school-age youth social skills (e.g., self-control, cooperation, and conflict resolution) to assist in adulthood when entering the workforce. All of the previously mentioned research on preincarcerated experiences of PIIIs stem from adulthood youth experiences which seemingly carry over into adulthood.

In addition, Feist-Price et al. (2014) discussed the school dropout level of 35% for surveyed African Americans who had a criminal background and highlighted that the high incarceration rate for minorities shows African Americans having the highest rate of incarceration. School administrators tend to place minority youths with disabilities (e.g., mentally and physically) in special education classes that have minimal resources to accommodate their needs (Feist-Price et al., 2014). Youths that receive inadequate assistance to progress tend to drop out of school and acquire deviant behavior which causes youths to either show up in juvenile court or adult court (e.g., depending on the offense) or carry that deviant behavior into adulthood (Feist-Price et al., 2014). Larner

(2017) discussed the exposure to gang activity, poverty, and criminal behavior which became influences for youths in Gugulethu in South Africa due to no exposure to positive outside communities that lead to further deviant behavior.

One of the participants in a qualitative study by Larner (2017) in South Africa found that one of the participants continued to offend by selling drugs to help care for the family while others remained dependent on family. Previously incarcerated females in a study by Heinemann et al. (2016) stated that success after incarceration included the ability to care for family and others in the same situation. When youths received the services needed in school instead of during incarceration, the youths were less likely to recidivate after incarceration or as adults after incarceration (Feist-Price et al., 2014). Moore et al. (2017) provided a study to allow young adults to share experiences in drug court assigned treatment programs, and the results included preincarceration experiences that included problems in the home (e.g., divorce, addictions, peer pressure, or death), or relationship problems that influenced negative or criminal behavior. The youths seemed to use drugs due to negative influences or as a coping mechanism to handle the stressors of life (Moore et al., 2017). Without adequate resources in the community to accommodate the needs of school-age children, the youth become disenfranchised and possibly succumb to deviant behavior (Feist-Price et al., 2014). In addition, legislative acts meant to deter deviant acts by youths and adults added to the incarceration rates of many minorities (Feist-Price et al., 2014).

The legislation crafted to combat the drug problems that included the “Rockefeller Drug Laws” (e.g., between the 1970s and 2003), TIS, and “Three Strikes

and You're Out" laws of later years exacerbated the policing of poor and minority communities which filled the jails and prisons with a disproportionate number of African Americans, other minorities, and the poor (Westcott, 2015). Even though legislators crafted ways to police the streets and offset crime, rehabilitation effects seemed lacking which led to high recidivism rates that further exacerbated the incarceration rate and the revolving door through the courts to the prison system (Westcott, 2015). Ashworth (2017) discussed the sentencing reformation in Wales and England that attempted proportionality laws that sentenced according to the gravity of the crime. However, different interpretations of the proportionality laws in England and Wales caused more questionable sentencing practices that required further consideration (Ashworth, 2017).

Although legislators attempted to create laws to benefit the people, Mayeux (2018) discussed the sentiments of many that referred to the criminal justice system as the criminal system that lacked justice and fairness. When considering the previously mentioned preincarcerated experiences, some researchers found that those experiences have an effect on or exacerbate incarceration experiences when the PII served a lengthy amount of time in prison (Landersø, 2015; Shlosberg et al., 2018). The experiences of the PII and the effects of those experiences, along with effects of having a prison record presented other problems for the PII.

### **Challenges to Employment**

The release of an offender does not negate the adverse effects of a criminal record and the societal stigma that accompanies that record (Keena & Simmons, 2015). Solinas-Saunders et al., (2015) discussed employers' fear of the PII reoffending due to the PEW

report of 2011 showing a recidivism rate of 40%, and other research findings from previous and subsequent years showing higher recidivism rates at nearly 67%. Concerns for company image and safety of other employees, along with fears of a PII reoffending, caused hiring managers to refuse to hire PIIs (Griffith & Young, 2017). Smaller businesses seemed more likely to hire a PII than large corporations that feared the threat of a PII reoffending (e.g., stigma attached to having a criminal record) and marring reputation of the corporation (Ethridge et al., 2014).

The collateral damage from acquiring a criminal record seems to ensure that punishment continues well after release which seemed like a life sentence limiting job opportunities and advancements (Farabee et al., 2014; Keena & Simmons, 2015). Farabee et al. (2014) discussed other researchers' findings that showed a reduction in the recidivism rate due to PII participation in transitional programs, and the participants stated that employment was a primary need after release along with housing and transportation. The strain and frustrations endured by the PII upon release might stem from a loss of community connections, stigmas, deteriorating economic conditions, lack of job opportunities, lack of transportation, housing issues, and financial hardships due to a loss of social connections and having a criminal record (Mears et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2016).

To solidify the challenges faced by PIIs, So (2014) provided a study based in China that looked at the challenges faced by PIIs upon reentry and revealed challenges to acquiring housing, employment, healthcare, and transportation and discriminatory practices against ethnic minorities. Swenson (2014) added that some of the barriers to

employment might include not having the appropriate attire for work, insufficient food, and mental and physical health issues that cause a PII not to stay on the job. Successful transitioning is dependent on several factors that include the attributes of the PII, social and familial supports, community economy status, and state legislation governing policies regarding PII's (So, 2014). The release into communities that lack resources and funding for adequate and sufficient program services is an issue, and some areas lack job opportunities due to resource-deprived or deplete communities (Visher et al., 2017). A Nepalese PII in So (2014) discussed the limited job offers available due to having a criminal record and the premise that friends and relatives attempt to fill that gap with financial and social support. The need exists to address the hardships of PII's in locating jobs and the necessary preparation to prepare for the employment seeking process.

In a case study conducted by So (2014) on the challenges and stigma associated with PII's, the researchers discussed the unrealistic expectations of the PII who seemed determined to become a productive member of society and acquire employment. However, Heinemann et al. (2016) addressed the lack of self-worth and self-esteem that stems from external and internal stigmas associated with having a felony. Heinemann et al. sought to understand what female PII's considered as success in the reentry process which seemed to go beyond the avoidance of recidivism. Female PII's defined reentry success as the acquisition of stable housing, freedom from the restraints of probation or parole reporting, the ability to support the family and other PII's, a conducive environment for psychological and physical healing that produces a sense of normalcy (Heinemann et al., 2016). The disconnection from family members, social supports, and

the unrealistic expectations of employments discussed in So (2014) lead some PIIs to return to criminal behavior and drugs. Visher et al., (2017) discussed the unrealistic expectations generated from transitional program participation that cause PIIs to reenter society unprepared for employer biases and community rejections.

A sample taken in 2001 showed that 60% of employers refused to hire PIIs that seems mostly due to background checks that reveal criminal records (Solinas-Saunders et al., 2015). Petersen (2016) discussed the use of criminal records by employers that seem to have implications of structural discrimination. The use of background checks to reveal criminal records after the PII completes all sentence requirements presented implications for a lifetime sentence that eliminated many job opportunities even though gainful employment acquisition is the leading factor in preventing recidivism (Petersen, 2016). Farabee et al. (2014) highlighted researchers' findings that verified that acquiring employment reduced recidivism. Racial Bias in hiring practices is a challenge for the minority PII, especially the African American PII, disproportionately incarcerated due to legislation crafted in the 1970s and 1980s that targeted individuals in high minority populated areas (Feist-Price et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2014). Mears et al. (2014) discussed the higher unemployment rates for African American males that a criminal record seemed to exacerbate. Solinas-Saunders et al. (2015) discussed the disproportionate number of African Americans with a felony conviction that created additional barriers to employment for the minority group. Minorities released into economically deprived communities endure additional challenges due to the lack of employment opportunities, which makes the development of interview skills necessary to acquire needed

employment to satisfy parole or probation requirements and meet financial needs (Feist-Price et al., 2014). However, if the PII obtains employment from the assistance of a transitional program, requirements from probation and parole (e.g., reporting times) might present obstacles to maintaining employment and cause the PII to lose the job (Swensen et al., 2014). Some employers would consider hiring a less qualified individual than a PII, and due to discriminatory practices, a minority PII has a 50% less chance of being hired than a white PII (Solinas-Saunders et al., 2015).

Approximately 60% of employers refuse to hire PII's due to criminal history, and in some cases, co-occurring disorders (e.g., substance addiction and mental or physical disorders) which add to the challenges faced by PII's that limit possibilities for employment (Ethridge et al., 2014; Miller & Miller, 2017). A criminal record, low education levels, minimal work experience, co-occurring disorders, preincarceration experiences, and the effects of prisonization are challenges to acquiring employment that transitional programs attempt to remedy by offering job-seeking skills and cognitive restructuring for a positive mindset change (Ethridge et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2014; Patzelt et al., 2014; Reed, 2015). Griffith and Young (2017) stated that the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) of 2012 provided employee guidelines for assessing a PII's criminal history when seeking employment. The EEOC stated that the employer needs to use more than a criminal record to disqualify a prospective employee, which many employees disregard even though the assessment of penalties is possible (Swensen et al., 2014).

The severity and type of offense, length of time since the offense, completion of sentence, progress toward rehabilitation, and type of employment sought by the PII might be further determining factors in qualifying a prospective employee (LePage et al., 2018; Swensen et al., 2014). Small, close-knit communities tend to share known personal information of PIIs, so that community members' preconceived notions of a PII's character has a basis in previous behavior and not possible changed behavior (Ethridge et al., 2014; So, 2014). LePage et al. (2018) discussed the findings of other researchers that showed a large percentage of employers have no set guidelines for omitting PIIs from employment considerations, yet the importance of having soft skills (e.g., communications and interaction skills) is evident. An employer's reluctance to hire PIIs seems due to fears of recidivism that might affect the company's reputation even though some employers resolve to hire ex-offenders by considering the attempts at rehabilitation (e.g., education advancements and acquiring employment skills; Hong et al., 2014). Rehabilitation efforts might include participation in a work readiness program or educational attainment with the help of transitional programs (Griffith & Young, 2017).

Researchers highlighted that PIIs have difficulties acquiring resources and employment due to mental inhibitions and the stigma associated with having a felony and additional diagnoses that transitional programs attempt to remedy (Feist-Price et al., 2014). LePage et al. (2018) discussed the PII's perceptions of others' perceived stigma and negative thoughts of the self (i.e., self-stigma) that hinders PIIs from seeking employment or assistance. Miller and Miller (2017) provide an evaluative assessment of the "Franklin County Community Reentry Program" (e.g., by the SCA for co-occurring

diagnosed individuals) to determine the effectiveness of the program in reducing recidivism among high-risk groups (p. 392). The results showed a reduction in recidivism among the participants due to the acquisition of employment after release, even though PII's that continued treatment for drug abuse or mental illness recidivated at a higher rate (Miller & Miller, 2017). The researchers attributed the obscure result to the high-risk level of those requiring referral for therapy continuation and the inability to determine the quality of the service provided after release (Miller & Miller, 2017).

Insufficient services for PII's might leave physical and psychological needs untreated. Angell et al. (2014) discussed the lack of resources after release for PII's which caused an abrupt disruption of needed medications and treatment for the mentally and physically disabled. However, many PII's refuse further treatment or mental health services due to the stigma associated with mental health and treatment that is seemingly an addition to the drawbacks of having a criminal record (Angell et al., 2014). Individuals that have disabilities endure additional challenges to acquiring employment which require consideration if the reduction of the recidivism rate is to remain a priority (Angell et al., 2014). Eshareturi and Serrant (2018) discussed the discontinuance of healthcare and drug rehabilitation due to a release from incarceration which caused problems for the PI. Waiting periods for initial appointments with primary physicians and waiting periods for services by providers caused a gap in medication and treatment that exacerbated illnesses (Eshareturi & Serrant, 2018). The use of service nurses helps to bridge the gap by connecting soon-to-be-released offenders with primary physicians, community services, and medical and psychological care helps to alleviate some of the frustrations to

acquiring adequate care that leads to recidivism (Eshareturi & Serrant, 2018). Angell et al. (2014) discovered that housing, employment, and financial needs took precedence in the assessed needs of the clients while Hong et al. (2014) found viable employment took precedence in the client assessments. Depending on the type of offense (e.g., sex offender or murder), the distrust and isolation felt by the offender might be extensive that affects social skills (Angell et al., 2014). Swenson et al. (2014) discussed a study completed in Florida which revealed that 40% of employers remain receptive to hiring PIIs upon the completion of a work or employment readiness training program. Without employment, the PIIs chances of reoffending increases which, gives credence to the need for transitional programs to assist the PII in acquiring the training or skills needed for cognitive restructuring and practical and job acquisition skills (Keena & Simmons, 2015).

### **The Need for Social Skills in the Job Market**

Some researchers argue that the labor market lacks sufficient jobs to accommodate those looking for work, while others argue that the job market is plentiful even though qualified applicants seem lacking (Torraco, 2016; Zandi, 2016). Deming (2017) discussed the importance of social skills in the competitive job market which makes the difference in remaining unemployed and securing the desired job. Transitional programs incorporate social skills training in program offerings to prepare the PII for the interview process and offset the anti-social behaviors (e.g., of prisonization) developed while incarcerated that decrease the feeling of self-efficacy (e.g., confidence in soft skills; Aysina et al., 2016; Bandura, 1977; Bartel, 2018). Even though transitional programs seek to prepare the PII for the job market, some of the programs create unrealistic

expectations of securing employment in a competitive job market (Visher et al., 2017). Torraco (2016) discussed the prevalence of low-paying and part-time jobs in the market that provide insufficient incomes for families without each adult member maintaining more than one job. Zandi (2016) provided contradictory information that stated that many of the jobs available that pay a living wage and above require specific skill sets and education that many individuals in the job market lack, thereby causing a scarcity in qualified applicants. The previously mentioned issues in the job market create a need for transitional programs to adequately prepare the PII for societal reentry with realistic expectations and preparedness in practical and soft skills to acquire the necessary employment to sustain the self and the PII's family and prevent recidivism.

### **Transitional Programs**

Individuals preparing to reenter society from prisons face many challenges that transitional programs attempt to offset (Visher et al., 2017). Transitional programs assist the PII in the transitional process after release by offering mental health and substance abuse services, mentoring, counseling, job and work readiness skills training, and practical job training (e.g., welding, apprenticeships, vocational training; Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Visher et al., 2017). Some programs assist the PII with locating housing and employment referrals that lead to interviews for which the PII needs interviewing skills before undertaking the interview (Aysina et al., 2016). Awenat et al. (2018) provided a qualitative study to investigate the experiences of PIIs who utilized the services of a prison suicide prevention program and determined the prevalence of a sense of posttraumatic growth from the program process with the exclusion of one participant

who had high levels of preincarceration self-confidence. Martin (2018) provided a qualitative study in which PIIs stated that addiction programs provided socialization skills by a requirement to share stories and interact with peers with the same addiction that served as preparation for socialization on the outside of prison. Even though transitional programs provided an array of services to assist the PII to reenter society successfully, the findings for program effectiveness seemed mixed.

The evaluation of some programs for effectiveness seems necessary to test the effectiveness in reducing recidivism. Visher et al. (2017) provided a study that evaluated the Serious and Violent Offenders Reentry Initiative (SVORI) that provided funding and program guidelines and looked at 12 different states to assess the effectiveness of 12 different programs using over 1600 male participants. The researchers found negative results for practical skills (e.g., the foundation of transitional programs) and more positive outcomes for cognitive skills that focused on changing the individual's perception and attitude (Visher et al., 2017). Farabee et al. (2014) discussed the research that found programs lacking for serious offenders even though findings suggest a reduction in re-arrest and drug use and longer times until re-arrest. Moore et al. (2017) discussed the results of a study to understand the perceptions of individuals sentenced to drug court treatment programs and found that females value individual therapy and establishing connections to build a community of support while the males preferred to remain disconnected from others in the group. Within 54 months of the study by Visher et al., approximately 82.5% of the participants recidivated with many of the offenders showing multiple arrests during the test period. Even though recidivism is the reoffending

in 3 years, the researchers showed that program participation lowered the recidivism rate and lengthened the time to re-arrest, although the long-term results of the study by Visher et al. (2017) revealed ineffective and inadequate results for recidivism.

The program called Realistic (e.g., in Gugulethu, South Africa) provided therapeutic interventions, mentorships, and life skills training that assisted the PII in resisting the temptations of returning to prior drug addictions and help with social integration (Swensen et al., 2014). However, the program lacked follow-up measures to monitor drug addiction resistance and employment retainment. Swensen et al. (2014) interjected that counselors and instructors need to remain aware of the expectations of the employer to better prepare the PII for employment. Swensen et al. stated that many researchers found that employment acquisition decreases the chances of recidivism, and Lerner (2017) stated there are cost-effective means to assisting the PII in the transition process when the program services occur in a familiar environment (e.g., a community center). However, Farabee et al. (2014) provided a study to determine the factors to offset recidivism that included employment acquisition and concluded that employment acquisition has an insignificant effect on recidivism. The previous research by Farabee et al. highlighted the need for PIIs to maintain employment and not merely acquire employment to have a positive effect on recidivism.

If the employment acquired produces insufficient income to sustain the PII and the PII's family, then merely obtaining employment is inadequate, and transitional programs need to consider many factors in preparing the PII (Farabee et al., 2014). Visher et al. (2017) discussed the short-term outcomes of transitional programs and found

positive results when housing, employment, and health assistance were inclusive in the program offerings. However, many of the program offerings lacked adequate services to produce any effect (Visher et al., 2017). Visher et al. (2017) discussed the research findings of other studies which found that when incarcerated individuals received vocational training, apprenticeships, and job placement upon release, the chances of recidivism decreased. Insufficient counselors and educators in penal institutions, the unavailability of services to incarcerated, but unsentenced offenders, and offenders that refuse to participate in transitional programs leave large percentages of offenders unprepared to reenter society (Larner, 2017). Feist-Price et al. (2014) discussed the inclusion of practical skills training to prepare the PII for job requirements available in the community to increase job acquisition chances.

The Ready2Work certificate (e.g., through career development centers) provides employers with some assurance that the PII is ready to work (Swensen et al., 2014). The Ready2Work program offers practical and soft skills training to acquire and maintain the job, and the Ready2Work certificate (e.g., through career development centers) provides employers with some assurance of the PII's training level which increases chances of job acquisition (Swensen et al., 2014). Even though the previous programs seek to prepare the PII for successful reentry, the need remains to assist the PII with the skills necessary to persevere, become confident, and innovative in job creation and acquisition.

Previous researchers highlighted that inmates' preincarceration entrepreneurial-like behavior (e.g., selling illegal substances) had similarities to average and beginner entrepreneurial skills, which led researchers to posit that with entrepreneurial training

inmates might have a better chance of integration with skills that look for employment opportunities in economically deprived communities (Keena & Simmons, 2015). Keena and Simmons (2015) provided an evaluative study of the 12-week Ice House Entrepreneurial Program implemented in the maximum-security prison in Mississippi and discussed the program offerings which led to all program graduates acquiring employment and an 18% drop in the recidivism rate. Patzelt et al., (2014) discussed the stigma associated with a PII's criminal record which leads many employers to refuse to hire the PII and stated that entrepreneurial training helped the incarcerated individual to acquire a more positive mindset for acquiring employment and the skillset to capitalize on opportunities to offset limited job offers. Entrepreneurial training entails more than the acquisition of skills. The offenders learn to adapt to, locate, and create opportunities in fluctuating and declining job markets (Keena & Simmons, 2015). Patzelt et al. (2014) discussed the participant mindset of the entrepreneurial program dropouts and stated that the dropouts had a dependency problem and a tendency to lack motivation or perseverance possibly caused by the effects of institutionalization or prisonization. The dependency, pessimistic, and passive attitude of the incarcerated individuals that did not continue in the entrepreneurial program (e.g., dropped out prematurely) discussed in Patzelt et al. revealed an attitude that presented additional challenges to acquiring employment due to a mindset that worked counter to the interview process. However, those individuals that remained in the program showed attitudes and characteristics of a person with high self-efficacy, personal accountability, and optimism about future endeavors and careers (Patzelt et al., 2014). The incarcerated individuals that completed

the 20-week in-house entrepreneurial program acquired some positive meaning to the experiences of incarceration by viewing the challenges after release as opportunities for learning from mistakes and showing signs of positive growth and optimism in succeeding in life after release (Patzelt et al., 2014). After completing the program, the individuals held a positive attitude about fellow incarcerated individuals, succeeding in reentry, and establishing an entrepreneurial venture due to developing the plans during the program (Patzelt et al., 2014).

Additional evaluative studies on transitional programs that took a different approach revealed varying results. Simourd et al. (2016) discussed the criminal attitude programs (CAP) that provided direct treatment for cognitive attitude changes that were the basis for the evaluative study which showed a 7% reduction in recidivism among the PII's using pre and posttreatment data. Yardley et al. (2015) discussed the therapeutic community of "Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) in Grendon, England" that used professionals in a holistic treatment process (i.e., in a democratic therapeutic community [DTM]) through group forums, tolerance, and reliving and discussing lived experiences (e.g., preincarceration and incarceration lived experiences; p. 159). The researchers highlighted the identity of one former resident of HMP Grendon (i.e., through a narrative) and discussed the co-existing and contrasting identities of the PII that are amendable and allowed the PII to adapt to social changes after DTM participation while incarcerated (Yardley et al., 2015). The constant reevaluating and adapting to the changing environment and social setting allowed the narrative identity to consistently evolve to a less receptive social setting (Yardley et al., 2015). The inclusion of the therapeutic

interventions to change the mindset and attitudes of the incarcerated individual and PII showed positive effects (Simourd et al., 2016; Yardley et al., 2015). However, along with mindset changes, researchers' findings also showed that the inclusion of education attainment (e.g., high school diploma or higher education) assists in increasing employment chances (Larner, 2017).

### **Education and Programs to Educate the Offender or Previously Incarcerated**

#### **Individual**

The low education levels of some PIIs (e.g., due to becoming school dropouts before incarceration), leave many released individuals with inadequate knowledge to complete applications or acquire specific jobs (Feist-Price et al., 2014; Reed, 2015). Larner (2017) discussed previous research findings that determined that for every dollar spent on educational programs in correctional facilities, those programs saved taxpayers four dollars in prison costs. Keena and Simmons (2015) discussed research that showed that when an inmate participates in a general education development (GED) diploma and transitional program, the likelihood of the PII recidivating reduces nearly 20%. Reed (2015) stated that a large percentage of PIIs enter penal institutions with a seventh-grade reading level. Ngozwana (2007) discussed the nonformal educational programs offered in Lesotho, Africa and stated that some educational programs in prison lack an adequate plan for disseminating the program offerings to the inmates. The value in nonformal education included the benefits of on-the-job training that opened the doors for further education attainment and fostered job creation (Ngozwana, 2017). The cultural specificity of the nonformal training taught the participant to adapt to the environment by enhancing

knowledge, skills, and character, and the program adapted to the participants' needs (Ngozwana, 2017). However, some inmate sentences were insufficient to accommodate individual education plans while other programs lacked funding which seemed inadequate in content and left no avenue for the offender to continue the learning process after release (Ngozwana, 2017).

Researchers have determined that educational programs combined with employment skills training and cognitive restructuring for attitude changes reduce recidivism (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Ngozwana, 2017). Many prison and correctional facilities offer GED programs and college credits to assist the offenders due to research findings that show a reduction in recidivism with an increase in education levels (Feist-Price et al., 2014; Reed, 2015). Some prisons offer college-level courses that allow offenders to acquire a higher level of education than a GED, which increases the chances of employment upon release (Feist-Price et al., 2014; Reed, 2015). Reed (2015) provided an evaluative study to determine the effects of educational programs for offenders by measuring the gains in academic achievements. The researcher examined other studies on the effects of educational attainment on the reduction of recidivism to determine if the participant results reflected gains in education or academic levels throughout the programs offered (Reed, 2015). The results of the data analysis showed positive and significant results of education programs on the individuals' academic achievements. Feist-Price et al. (2014) discussed the acquisition of a GED or higher education that increased a PII's chances of getting a job and decreased their chances of recidivating. An increase in knowledge can potentially add to a person's self-efficacy or

the confidence of sufficient knowledge to accomplish a specific goal. Reed (2015) discussed the issue of educational attainment that many researchers determined was a factor in the increased recidivism rate due to the release of individuals unequipped to compete in the community for jobs (Feist-Price et al., 2014). The findings revealed that inmates made educational progress and higher scores in the online programs even though the PII's continuation rate seemed higher for instructor-led classes (Reed, 2015). Swensen et al. (2014) highlighted the use of the Offender Workforce Development Specialist training (i.e., an online learning program) to prepare the incarcerated individual or the PII for the employment process.

The low reading levels and high school drop-out rate among surveyed offenders showed that approximately 60% lacked a high school education (Reed, 2015, p. 537). The high percentage of offenders without a high school education or GED equivalent presented an area for inclusion in the services provided in transition programs. The findings from different studies regarding the needs of the inmate to ensure adequate preparation for reentry requires a needs assessment and a plan to implement the services needed by tailoring the program offering for each offender, thereby creating a more prepared PII for societal re-integration and continued learning (Ngozwana, 2017). The effects of lengthy prison sentences or prisonization that create maladaptive behavior seem counterintuitive to the interview process that transitional programs endeavored to offset. To eliminate or diminish some of the challenges faced by the PII in the acquisition of employment, transitional programs provide training to increase the success of the

interview that many employers use in the hiring process to determine the eligibility of job applicants.

### **Job Interviews**

Many businesses and factories use the interview process to determine whether an applicant fits the job description and requirements for employment in a particular establishment (Derous et al., 2016). Aysina et al. (2016) described the interview process as stressful which produces anxiety, especially for the long-term unemployed (i.e., unemployed for a year or more) that causes additional feelings of depression and low self-esteem. The need exists to assist the long-term unemployed to acquire confidence in interviewing skills (i.e., interviewing self-efficacy; Aysina et al., 2016). Derous et al. (2016) discussed the stigmas attributed to certain interviewees that cause interviewers to generate negative impressions (e.g., tattoos, appearance imperfections, or disabilities) and become fearful or judgmental. Martin (2018) discussed the lasting prison effect that included prison tattoos and missing teeth. In prison, a tattoo might distinguish an individual according to group identity and provide a sense of belonging that seems intimidating or threatening outside of prison (Derous et al., 2016). The first impression in an interviewee is a lasting perception that could decrease an applicant's chances of getting hired or lead to a subsequent interview or a job offer (Tan et al., 2016).

Interviews have three phases that include the submission of an application and resume, the initial interview to discuss skills and experience while gaining rapport, and a subsequent interview to discuss the possible value to the company and solidify a positive impression (Derous et al., 2016; Tan et al., 2016). Interviews take place by phone, skype,

and in-person, even though in-person interviews take precedence, and the process lack uniformity across industries (Derous et al., 2016; Tan et al., 2016). However, most employers value a firm handshake, eye contact, adequate reasoning for seeking employment with the particular company, job, job search, resume building, and interview skills, and the ability to articulate the perceived value in hiring the individual in face-to-face interviews (Bartel, 2018; Kasprzak, 2016). Martin (2018) discussed the PII's disdain for small talk and discomfort with others that included professionals or employers entering personal space due to the lingering effects of prisonization. Feelings of anxiety, when asked questions due to not knowing how to or being comfortable with providing an answer, make the PII want to withdraw and seek to remain surrounded by other PII's or individuals tied to preincarceration criminal activity (Martin, 2018).

Making small talk to elaborate on a question or to establish rapport and asking questions about details of the company or interview that need clarifying are soft skills that employers look for when assessing the strengths of an employee candidate (Bartel, 2018). Bartel (2018) discussed the need for a positive attitude and professionalism when going to an interview which requires soft skills training. Soft skills training includes understanding the verbal and nonverbal communication skills that employers expect, which includes knowing the proper responses to greetings and interview questions, gestures, and body postures (Bartel, 2018). Kasprzak (2016) discussed the need to promote the self and abilities which require confidence in personal abilities to do so, which alluded to the need for self-efficacy during the interview. The nonverbal gestures that validate insufficient confidence or a show of aggressiveness are body language cues

that an interviewer negatively notates (Bartel, 2018; Kasprzak, 2016). Tan et al. (2016) discussed the need for interviewee politeness throughout the interview process, which includes answering questions and elaborating in the responses. The Interview Survival Guide (2019) addressed the need for an interviewee to relax and feel confident, even though some of the symptoms of prisonization include hypervigilance and loss of self-worth and confidence in acquiring employment. Even though many of the qualities mentioned previously help to ensure a successful interview, the average PII lacks the necessary skills without adequate transitional training programs which offer practical and soft skills and cognitive restructuring to offset the effects of prisonization.

The first issue is the idea of presenting with a firm handshake with eye contact while exhibiting a sufficient amount of confidence without seeming arrogant (Bartel, 2018; Kasprzak, 2016). The idea of reaching out to shake another individual's hand in solidarity might present a problem for some PIIs due to acquired feelings of distrust and hypervigilance (Ethridge et al., 2014). Some inmates adapt to prison life by withdrawing and becoming isolated to maintain safety due to not knowing whom to trust and can be trusted (Ethridge et al., 2014). Prison life effects prisoners cognitively and behaviorally due to limited freedom which produces hypervigilance (e.g., distrust and suspicion), dependence on institution, over control, and alienation, social withdrawal and isolation, exploitive norms, diminished self-worth and personal values, and PTSD reactions that are coping mechanisms but do not work well in a connected, small closely interconnected rural community (Ethridge et al., 2014).

A PII loses confidence, becomes disheartened, develops anxiety, and begins to develop fear as employment hope diminish due to a criminal record and the process in acquiring employment (Angell et al., 2014). The reentry process becomes so stressful due to challenges that PII's commit suicide 13 times more likely during the first 2 weeks after release (Angell et al., 2014). However, Mitchell et al. (2016) discussed the benefits of visitation on maintaining social ties with family and social supports that offset the loss of socialization skills and maintain social bonds. Researchers showed that maintaining social bonds through visitation offsets inside offenses while helping in the development of positive prosocial behavior and reducing recidivism (Mitchell et al., 2016). Shlosberg et al. (2018) discussed researchers' findings that maintaining or acquiring social bonds reduced recidivism. Even though visitation helps offenders to maintain social bonds, many offenders lose visitation rights due to inside offenses, or visitors lack transportation or awareness of visitor restrictions and regulations which diminish that avenue to maintain social bonds (Mitchell et al., 2016).

Depending on the type of job, some employers might require a resume and the ability to articulate what value the PII would bring to the company (Epstein, 2018). Specific transitional programs provide resume building and interview skills even though some individuals use the expertise of resume building services to highlight experience pertinent to the job (Epstein, 2018). Interviewing skills taught in some transitional programs prepare the individuals to answer possible questions through mock interviews and role-playing (Aysina et al., 2016). Ngozwana (2017) discussed the value in

nonformal education by highlighting the benefits that included on-the-job training that opened the doors for further education attainment and fostered job creation.

The cultural specificity of the nonformal training teaches the participant to adapt to the environment by enhancing knowledge, skills, and character, and the program adapts to the participant's needs (Ngozwana, 2017). Understanding that employers look at body language, dress, and a certain amount of exuberance during the interview creates a need for program services to offer instruction on interview etiquette and responses (Kasprzak, 2016). Martin (2018) discussed the PII's use of dress codes to fit in and seem well adjusted despite the effects of prisonization which seem more prevalent after release even though time diminishes the effect.

Some PIIs entered prison with little or no work experience that created anxiety, apprehension, and low self-efficacy due to a lack of skills training (So, 2014). Aysina et al. (2016) discussed the use of role-playing in the development of interviewing skills to acquire interviewing self-efficacy through a simulation training program. The training program allowed the participants to role-play to increase interviewing and communication skills (Aysina et al., 2016). Even though the PII completed programs to help develop the proper interview skills, the need existed to help PIIs get to the interview due to many employers' possible refusal to consider or hire a person with a criminal record.

Ban the Box is an initiative to eliminate any criminal history questions from the application to allow PIIs a better chance of securing employment by getting to the interview stage (Griffith & Young, 2017; Solinas-Saunders et al., 2015). Griffith and

Young (2017) provided a qualitative study to determine the perspectives of Human Service managers in hiring practices in Ban the Box states and found some employers considered hiring PII's that showed rehabilitation efforts. LePage et al., (2018) supported and highlighted the Ban the Box initiative due to findings in the study that determined that once a hiring manager granted the PII an interview, the completed interview increased the chances of a job offer.

Some employers look at the transformation attempts of the ex-offender as a positive, which helps in the initial interview process (Griffith & Young, 2017). When granted an interview, if the initial impression of the PII is positive, the negative lens of later information acquired by a hiring manager after a background check or PII responses to questions required further clarification of offenses to negate the initial positive impression (Griffith & Young, 2017). Meeting a PII face-to-face in an interview, after establishing rapport, humanizes the PII and allows for inferences of instinct and personal perceptions of the interviewee (LePage et al., 2018). In addition to the need to assist the PII to reach the interview stage with legislative acts and initiatives, the programs should be inclusive of cultural considerations.

### **Cultural Considerations for Previously Incarcerated Individuals**

Transitional programs need to include culturally sensitive postincarcerated program services to accommodate the PII in the reintegration process (So, 2014). Dawes et al. (2017) discussed the criminal behavior and the recidivism rates of indigenous people in Australia and highlighted the need to consider culture in the development of programs. So (2014) discussed the cultural aspects of being an ethnic minority and

incarcerated and stated that isolation occurs due to language barriers which lead to nonparticipation in transitional programs. The use of community-centered programs ensures that the services offered include those services which benefit the individuals of the community and offset offenses or criminal behavior to protect the community (Dawes et al., 2017). Martin (2018) discussed the difference in the inside or prison) culture from the outside culture that PII's described as a culture shock that caused feelings of a need to withdraw and become isolated. Establishing a connection with other PII's allowed the PII to feel less rejected and more understood by individuals from the same previous environment or addictive behavior (So, 2014). Cultural considerations help in the process of assisting the PII that requires transitional program consideration.

Culturally sensitive programs help to ensure adequate services which is the reason that Bartel (2018) discussed the needs of the immigrants looking for employment who needed to learn the communication skills that the employers expected which required culturally sensitive training. The immigrant needed to understand the business and interviewer expectation and culture, and the program had to incorporate training that eliminated language barriers and cultural differences (Bartel, 2018). The pragmatics of the language (i.e., the appropriate use of the second language) and the soft skills training (e.g., learning to incorporate politeness in the encounters) was a part of the interview training program for those individuals learning English as a second language (Bartel, 2018). Due to the different cultures of minority PII's, considering cultural beliefs of others might require the understanding of the cultural practices of the individual's home land

and teaching the importance of those cultural beliefs to the employers to increase the immigrant PII's possibility of attaining a job (Bartel, 2018).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The present study is an attempt to acquire the experiences and perceptions of the job interview process for PIIs after completing a transitional program, interview, and acquiring employment, when applicable. The theories of prisonization and self-efficacy provide the basis and the theoretical lens for the study (Bandura, 1977; Barak-Glantz, 1983). Even though many challenges exist for the PII when re-entering society, some employers seem receptive to hiring PIIs after rehabilitation efforts (Griffith & Young, 2017; So, 2014). Many factors influence the behaviors and psychological wellbeing of the PII that includes preincarceration experiences, the effects of prisonization, and postincarceration challenges (Martin, 2018; Lerner, 2017). Some researchers highlight the need for cognitive restructuring and mindset and attitude changes to offset or alter possible behaviors from preincarceration influences and experiences and the effects of incarceration (Simourd et al., 2016; Visher et al., 2017). The symptoms of depression create a lack of motivation to acquire employment, and the maladapted social and relational skills produce a need for mental resources upon reentry, even though studies show that the symptoms of prisonization decrease after release with resource acquisition (Schnittker, 2014).

Transitional program services attempt to offset the adaptations to criminal influences and prisonization by offering practical, soft, life, and job skills and educational programs (Bartel, 2018; Martin, 2018; Reed, 2015; Shlosberg et al., 2018). Some

programs offer job training programs to equip the incarcerated individual with skills, while other programs offer cognitive behavioral therapy treatment as primary and other skills secondary (Simourd et al., 2016). Educational services within transitional programs offer general diplomas and higher education credits, along with some informal learning programs (Larner, 2017).

The program offerings, education, and skills training assist the PII in acquiring employment. Due to the use of interviews by most employers to qualify individuals, the need exists to prepare the PII to interact with employers, practice social skills, and build confidence in the ability to maneuver through the interview with ease for a better chance of acquiring employment (Aysina et al., 2016). Deming (2017) highlighted the importance of developed social skills in the workplace and conducted a study to assess the relevance of cognitive and social skills and found that social skills equate to higher-paid, nonroutine jobs with a high probability for advancements. Programs that teach soft skills show the PII the polite and correct way to respond to the interviewer and questions while practical skills training provides resume-building skills and how to locate jobs in the area (Tan et al., 2016). Cultural considerations for language barriers and different beliefs are necessary for attempts to assist the PII (So, 2014). The program offerings for PII's encompass preparation to acquire housing, employment, and social connections for a successful reentry (Bartel, 2018).

Many challenges exist for the PII that transitional programs attempt to offset (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016). The challenges and barriers to a successful reentry seem due to employer's refusal to hire PII's, societal stigmas to accompany a criminal

record, and the psychological conditioning of prisonization that alters the behaviors of the PII (Griffith & Young, 2017). The self-efficacy or the confidence in the self and knowledge acquired to accomplish a specific task, (e.g., in this case, a job interview) are concepts which seem worth exploring in the attempt to gain the perspectives of the PII's that return to communities with a need and sometimes a requirement to acquire employment (Bandura, 1977). The participation in transitional programs while incarcerated helps to prepare the inmate, and the postincarceration programs attempt to fill in the gap for those individuals that did not or could not participate in a program while incarcerated (Patzelt et al., 2014). Allowing the PII's the opportunity to describe personal experiences and perspectives of the interview process after participation in a transitional program and the completion of the interview will be instrumental in informing legislators, program developers, and counselors on meeting the needs of PII's to help prevent recidivism and become a productive citizen in a successful reentry. After presenting an overview of an exhaustive literature review, the next section provides details of the method and methodology of this study.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this generic qualitative research design was to explore the experiences and perceptions of PIIs after participation in a transitional program and before and after a job interview. The attempt to explore the experiences and perceptions of PIIs regarding the job interview process was due to the documented effects of prisonization and the preincarceration experiences that add to the effects of prisonization (Ethridge et al., 2014; Shlosberg et al., 2018). In addition, in light of the effects of prisonization that diminish self-efficacy and self-esteem as well as affect social skills, the exploration of PIIs' experiences and perceptions provided additional knowledge of how PIIs described the interview process in the quest to acquire employment (Martin, 2018; Miller & Miller, 2017; Patzelt et al., 2014). I wanted to explore what PIIs believed after completing a transitional program and preparing for a job interview, and what they believed after they had completed a job interview and acquired a job, when applicable. The findings from this study will inform future transitional program development and help better prepare individuals leaving incarceration for job readiness.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The development of the main question followed by subsequent questions came from an exhaustive review of the literature that revealed a gap regarding PIIs in relation to prisonization, social skills, employment, and recidivism. Attached in Appendix A are the research and interview questions. The interview questions began with questions to acquire background and demographic information (i.e., age and sentence length) and preincarceration experiences from PIIs. The subsequent questions were used to acquire

information on education, incarceration and postincarceration transitional program experiences, interview experiences and perceptions, and questions that were dependent on job acquisition. The questions allowed the PIIs to describe their experiences and perceptions of the interview process and their preparedness or unpreparedness for the process. The PIIs' feelings, opinions, experiences, and perceptions provided the data for analysis. The nature of the research question called for PIIs to discuss their experience of the external phenomenon (Percy et al., 2015). Although a plethora of knowledge existed on the experiences of PIIs, the knowledge base lacked information on the previously mentioned phenomenon. Given this fact, coupled with the description of an external (i.e., not internal, or psychological, as in phenomenology) phenomenon, the generic qualitative design seemed appropriate (Liu, 2016). Even though the generic design allowed flexibility in the methodology, the detail in describing the approach and process added rigor to the study (Kahlke, 2014; Liu, 2016; Percy et al., 2015). The questions were grounded and aligned with the theoretical framework and reflected concepts within the theory of self-efficacy and prisonization (Bandura, 1977; Barak-Glantz, 1983).

### **Defining the Central Concepts of the Phenomenon**

This study involved several central concepts, which included the relationship between prisonization and lengthy prison sentences, prisonization affecting social skills, and preincarceration experiences exacerbating the effects of prisonization. Schnittker (2014) described the concept of prisonization as the adjustment to prison life which produces psychological and behavioral changes for purposes of institutional adjustment and survival. Prisonization affects all prisoners as they assimilate into the prison

subculture, and the length of the prison sentence is a determining factor in the depth and severity of the altered mindset and the chances of recidivism (Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Schnittker, 2014; Shlosberg et al., 2018). The concept of examining individuals who served a lengthy prison sentence stemmed from researchers' findings that a lengthy prison sentence produces behaviors that work counter to social skills development (Ethridge et al., 2014).

The effects of prisonization include hypervigilance, withdrawn and antisocial behavior, and distrust of others. These effects work counter to the expectations of reintegration into society after release (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017). The adverse psychological effects of prisonization, which cause a loss of self-confidence, self-worth, and social skills, were the basis for the need to understand how those effects impacted the development of self-efficacy and the job interview process (Shlosberg et al., 2018). The expectations that employers have when interviewing a candidate for a job include adequate responses to questions about job requirements, adequateness for the job, and the ability to work as a member of a team, which require social skills that the effects of prisonization seem to diminish (Bartel, 2018).

For success after release from prison, PIIs need to have confidence in the practical skills that they have learned, as well as the knowledge necessary to complete the interview process successfully. Practical skills include specific skills (e.g., welding or auto mechanics) to fit job requirements, along with resume and job-hunting skills (Ngozwana, 2017; Tan et al., 2016). Soft skills include knowledge of and confidence in answering interview questions that require training to complete, along with the ability to

convey polite and respectable attitudes during the interview process (Bartel, 2018). When PII's confidence in the soft and practical skills that they have learned seems sufficient for an interview and when they fit the requirements for a job, then the possibility exists that the development of self-efficacy through confidence acquired in skills development will lessen PII's frustration with the interview process and job acquisition (Aysina et al., 2016; Ngozwana, 2017).

Some researchers see the use of intervention programs to foster cognitive restructuring after prison adaptation as necessary to prepare PII's for societal transitioning (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Visher et al., 2017). Ngozwana (2017) discussed the benefits of education acquisition for the reduction of recidivism, which gives credence to the addition of questions on education acquisition to gather PII's perceptions of self-efficacy and the interview process, along with preincarcerated job experience. The following were concepts examined in developing the research and interview questions.

One of the concepts was the education level that was a determining factor in the chances of recidivism, along with work experiences, job training, employment, and a criminal record that affected a PII's rate of recidivism which provided additional concepts within the study (Griffith & Young, 2017; Ngozwana, 2017). Stigmas associated with having a criminal record and challenges to employment, which include lack of education and employment experience, a criminal record, and ineffective participation or nonparticipation in transitional programs, present challenges to acquiring employment (Griffith & Young, 2017). Prisonization affects social skills, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-worth, which are necessary for positive social, emotional, and

psychological health, as well as for effective interviews (Ethridge et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2014).

Another idea related to the framework is that prisonization involves adaptive behaviors from prison life that researchers consider to be maladaptive and counterproductive during the reentry process, which requires cognitive development and restructuring during transitional program participation, as well as employment acquisition for the prevention of recidivism (Barak-Glantz, 1983). A subsequent idea is that self-efficacy includes confidence in executing learned skills, producing actions or confidence in cognitive development to yield the desired response, which includes developing self-worth and confidence (Bandura, 1977).

In addition to the concepts addressed in the study, the literature review revealed a conflicting concept. Hong et al. (2014) tested self-esteem and self-efficacy in relation to the hope of acquiring employment and determined that self-esteem correlated with employment hope and successful reentry. However, Boduszek and Debowska (2017) discussed the development of perceived positive self-esteem due to the effects of prisonization and identification with criminal ingroups that increased the recidivism rate. If ex-offenders acquire self-esteem through acceptance by an ingroup with ties to deviant behavior, then cognitive restructuring requires more than the development of positive self-esteem (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017). Having considered the concepts examined within the study, I provide an overview in the next section of the chosen research method that aligned with the research question and purpose of the study.

## **Research Tradition and Rationale**

I used a generic qualitative research study design to conduct a detailed, in-depth examination of PIIIs' experiences and perceptions in order to gather rich, detailed data (Weller et al., 2018). The generic qualitative design has roots in social realism and constructivism (Liu, 2016). Social constructivist approaches allow participants to articulate and describe experiences and the meaning attached to those experiences (Kahlke, 2014). A generic qualitative unbound study design allows participants to describe experiences and perceptions of external, real-world events, so that the researcher can acquire practical knowledge from those experiences while maintaining alignment in the framework with rigor (Kahlke, 2018; Percy et al., 2015). The methodology section of such a study provides detail and clarification concerning the procedures for sampling and analysis as well as the study framework, due to the general nature of the qualitative design (Lewis, 2015). The design allows researchers to understand the meaning attributed to or how individuals experience an external phenomenon to improve practice for educational purposes or examine processes (unlike phenomenology; Dodgson, 2017; Liu, 2016). The design allows for flexibility in the approach or methodology within the study or even the lack of a set methodology, which requires a detailed account of procedures in the process of the study (Kahlke, 2014; Liu, 2016). The design was appropriate for this study due to the need to understand the meanings and experiences that the PIIIs conveyed in the interview process after completing an intervention program and interview.

The quality of an interview in a qualitative study is dependent upon the participant and the experience and knowledge of the researcher, which are essential in

acquiring detailed, rich data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). A researcher uses interviewing in the generic approach as a data collection tool due to the potential to uncover new and validating detailed data on a given phenomenon. Such data might remain vague and uncovered with the use of a survey or questionnaire with closed-ended questions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the main instrument in this generic qualitative design and interview process (i.e., as the interviewer), I guided the interview conversations to provide a broad range of perspectives through the various steps in the interview process. During the interviews, I exercised attentiveness (as an observer and interviewer) to verbal and nonverbal cues in order to ascertain the need for probes to extend participants' responses. The documentation of all verbal and nonverbal cues during the interviews provided additional data for later analysis of the emotions that participants exhibited during their responses. The ability to ask probing questions in interviews while reframing and refining questions provides an avenue to acquire information to add to the body of knowledge regarding the phenomenon or topic of interest (Kallio et al., 2016). The richness and detail of the data in a study such as this one is dependent on the skill of the interviewer and the quality of the questions developed on the interview guide. A researcher may need to conduct practice sessions with peer researchers to test the effectiveness of the questions and approach in a study using interviews (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Using the results from practice sessions, I developed questions that would prompt the participants to describe stories and responses pertinent to the phenomenon of interest,

thereby furnishing rich and detailed data (Kallio et al., 2016). Through probes and follow-up questions, I prompted the interviewees to expand on and provide examples for their responses, thereby gathering additional data that I would have been unable to acquire with a survey or questionnaire (Weller et al., 2018). To facilitate ease of understanding as well as the provision of rich and detailed data, I ensured that the questions were simple, concise, and free of jargon (Weller et al., 2018). As the main instrument in the practice sessions, I gained the practice necessary to hone my interview skills and refine my questions and approach to the study. Additionally, it was necessary to address any possible biases and consider the researcher–participant relationship in order to ensure transparency and create a robust account of the process.

### **Researcher Bias and Researcher–Participant Relationship**

In this study, the need existed to bracket any preconceived ideas or knowledge that I had about PII, recidivism, and the challenges faced by PII by conducting thorough research on recidivism, self-efficacy, prisonization, and job interviewing skills while allowing the participants to describe their experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In choosing participants for the study, adherence to the criteria outlined in the sampling and selection process guarded against participant bias (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Due to many encounters with PII who had difficulties with transitioning from prison and inevitably recidivating, I was privy to some of the issues faced by PII. I ensured transparency throughout the study by creating a journal of my thoughts and perceptions during my interactions with the PII, thereby creating an audit trail. Kahlke (2014) discussed the use

of an audit trail to document the generic qualitative process for purposes of transparency and confirmability. I served as the researcher, interviewer, and observer of nonverbal cues and voice inflections during the interview process and took measures to ensure transparency.

Having no personal prison experience, I had no experience with prisonization that might have biased the interview process. However, I used peer researchers to examine the transcribed data, codes, and analyses (i.e., performed investigator triangulation) to ensure that my positionality and ontology did not dilute the coding or analysis process (Bleiker et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I ensured that each participant encountered all interview questions with the same basic wording and probes to maintain validity and allow participant variations to responses according to their personal perceptions and experiences. The participants received a gift card after completing the interviews, which brought about an ethical issue.

### **Ethical Issues Surrounding Incentives**

I used gift cards as an incentive for participation in an effort to compensate the participants for their time. After release from prison, PIIs seek to acquire employment and integrate back into society. The \$10 gift cards that I distributed to participants served to compensate them for time spent during the initial interview and follow-up interview. The participants received a total of two \$10 gift cards (i.e., one for the initial interview and another for the follow-up interview). Each gift card was mailed after the completion of the corresponding interview.

In the next section, I outline the steps involved in selecting participants, conducting interviews, analyzing the data, ensuring trustworthiness, and dealing with ethical issues within the study.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

#### ***The Sampling Strategy***

The purposeful and snowball sampling strategy allowed me to purposefully select participants who fit the criteria established within this study while assessing the recommendations of the participant volunteers (Ngozwana, 2017). The study involved male participants with varying sentence lengths of 5 years or more. The age range of participants was between 23 and 39 years. In order to meet participation criteria for the initial interview, each participant needed to have completed a transitional program; completion of a job interview was required for the follow-up. Participants did not need to have a job interview scheduled to complete the initial study interview. However, each participant completed a job interview after the initial interview. After completing the job interview and before the second interview, each participant received the instruction to answer questions in relation to the job interview. The vetting of the participants occurred during the initial phone interaction (see Appendix B for vetting questions), as outlined in the procedures.

#### ***The Criteria for Participant Selection***

Regarding the age criteria for the study, Hong et al. (2014) stated that the age range for the majority of prisoners, parolees, and individuals on probation is between 18

and 34. Fowler and Kurlychek (2018) discussed the age ranges of youths tried as adults in the past and highlighted some updated laws that disallowed convicted youths less than 17 years of age to receive adult sentences. In addition, Shlosberg et al. (2018) and Ethridge et al. (2014) discussed the findings that showed that age was a factor in the chances of recidivism, in that the length of sentence and age of the PII had an effect on the chances for recidivism. Due to the required criteria within the study of all participants having spent at least five consecutive years in prison and the stated age range of the majority of parolees and PIIs on probation having an average base age of 18 as discussed in Hong et al. (2014), I used an age range of 23 to 39. The age range added 5 years to the base age stated in Hong et al. (2014) to ensure that all study PIIs had spent at least 5 years in an adult prison system before release while maintaining an age cap of below 40. The additional participant criteria consisted of PIIs that served at least a 5-years consecutive sentence in prison, completed an intervention program (e.g., for the initial interview), and a job interview to complete a follow-up interview. The participant's release date needed to be no more than 1 year from the inception of the study due to many transitional programs lasting 6 to 22 weeks and the findings by Martin (2018) that some prisonization habits diminish in about 6 months, even though some last nearly 2 years (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Patzelt et al., 2014; Visser et al., 2017).

### ***The Number of Study Participants and the Rationale***

In determining the number of participants, the use of previous studies of a similar subject area provided the basis for the suggested number of cases. Regarding sample size, Ngozwana (2017) discussed the use of five participants using purposeful and

snowball sampling in a study assessing the perceptions of PIIs from the correctional facility of Lesotho of Southern Africa. Eshareturi and Serrant (2018) discussed the use of eight purposely selected participants to determine the experiences of participants in receiving health care postincarceration. Chan and Boer (2016) conducted a study to determine the perceptions of PIIs and factors that influence a successful reentry regarding finding employment and support in the reduction of recidivism with 12 purposely selected PIIs. Based on previous studies on the perceptions of PIIs, a sample size of 10 seemed appropriate. However, I sampled four adult, male PIIs and reached saturation due to no new salient items in the data among the four participants.

### ***The Relationship Between Saturation and Sample Size***

The sample size was relative to data saturation. Liu (2016) stated that data saturation (e.g., when no new information or themes develop) is an appropriate measure for a generic qualitative design, unlike a grounded theory approach that requires theoretical saturation (Kahlke, 2017). The number of participants is dependent on the length and number of interviews, probing question, purpose, and the amount of detail for prevalent, and salient ideas for maximum theme development (Weller et al., 2018). The acquisition of rich, detailed data helped in reaching saturation with a small sample size due to no new salient items or ideas uncovered. Even though I stated a priori count of 10 participants for this study, the final number of four participants was dependent on data saturation, which allowed for fewer participants than originally stated.

### **Specific Procedures for Identifying, Contacting, and Recruiting Participants: Plans for Organizing the Interview**

In preparing for the interviews, choosing a video application through which to conduct the interviews and testing and preparing the audio recording equipment or application occurred before interviewing the PIIIs. I conducted the interviews by video on the Skype application to acquire the data and ensured that each participant had access to the necessary equipment to complete the interview. Weller (2017) discussed the use of internet video interviews and highlighted the new frontier that video interviews present, even though face-to-face interviews is the standard data collection method for qualitative studies. I used the same video application for all participants. I documented all details of the process in a journal to ensure replicability and transparency. Kallio et al. (2015) discussed the construction of the interview guide that researchers might use to conduct mock interviews to test the interview questions to determine the questions' effectiveness in acquiring adequate data.

To overcome the inexperience of interviewing, practicing with peers in practice sessions with the interview guide helped in understanding the concepts of interviewing, and honing the necessary skills. I ensured that the layout for the interview was sufficient for both the researcher and participant and allowed for adjustments, probes, or changes for a more in-depth data collection process (Weller et al., 2018). I eliminated jargon and acronyms that were uncommon to the participant for better understanding (Kallio et al., 2015). I tested the interview guide in preparation for tackling participant understandability concerns and adjusting for a quality interview guide with questions that

acquired the data needed (Weller et al., 2016). I listened to the participants and never rushed into the questions to allow the participants to articulate concerns and perceptions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Weller et al., 2016).

The first questions consisted of broad questions to put the PII at ease, followed by detailed questions and probes to seek clarification for any unclear responses (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Weller et al., 2016). The questions accounted for the theories addressed in the study by incorporating questions that considered the theoretical framework and concepts of the phenomenon. After concluding the interview and thanking the participant, I provided the participants with information to acquire the assistance of a counselor or therapist. I reiterated the resource information from the informed consent form during the debriefings of the PIIs (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Weller et al., 2016). Preparation for the interview required planning and consideration for all the above guidelines and the need to acquire sufficient data to answer the research questions for rich and detailed data.

### **Outline of Proposed Interview Procedures**

The procedures for the proposed interviews served as a guideline for the interview process. The protocol contained a set of questions developed from the concepts of the effects of prisonization and the development of self-efficacy along with educational attainment and transitional program participation within the study's framework. The questions allowed the PII to describe any socialization skills acquired for the interview process. The following paragraphs provide the outline for the proposed interview procedures.

The procedures began by providing the program directors with a flyer for posting to solicit participants from program graduates. On the flyer, the participant received instructions to contact the researcher if interested in participating in the study. However, due to an insufficient number of participants from the approach to recruitment, I sent a procedure change request for a recruitment strategy change to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) due to the global pandemic that limited access to possible participants. The IRB approved the online recruitment of participants by creating a Facebook page for the specific purpose of posting the recruitment flyer and promoting the page among Facebook users. I sent messages through Facebook messenger to Facebook groups that assisted PIs, page administrators, and individual Facebook users to promote the created Facebook page. The online recruitment produced two participants that each found two more interested participants through the snowballing process.

I vetted the PII in the initial call to determine if the PII fitted the stated criteria for the study. When chosen to participate in the study, the participant received instructions to provide the contact information to receive the informed consent form by email which included information about the study, the structure of the interview process, and the line of questioning. The PIs received a verbal briefing of the purpose and instructions to thoroughly read all information within the consent form. The participant also received instructions to voluntarily refer or recommend potential participants due to the use of the snowball method of sampling. The participant received instructions to submit a consent to participate in the study by stating “I consent” in a subsequent email if interested in

participating in the study. After providing consent, the participant received instruction to provide a convenient date and time for the initial interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

I conducted each interview in the privacy of my home-office, and each participant chose a private location for personal use for the interview. All participants had or downloaded the Skype application before the interview. The interviews occurred during different times of the day and varying days of the week. The average duration of the initial interview was 30 minutes, and the average duration of the follow-up interview (after the completion of a job interview) was 15 minutes. Appendix A contains a copy of the interview questions.

At the onset of the interview, I introduced myself and establish rapport by thanking the participant for agreeing to the interview and reiterated the purpose of the study, relevant concepts, and the informed consent form for clarity (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I reminded the participant that the study participation was voluntary, and omission was acceptable for any question that seemed invasive or troubling. I moved any questions that required additional thought by the participant to the end of the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The next step included an initial question to put the participant at ease and initiate the discussion, followed by a progression of questions that required a more in-depth and thoughtful answer as the discussion progressed. Since the interviewing process was semistructured, the use of probes helped to secure more in-depth information as the participant's responses warranted a prompt to elaborate on the responses. After asking all

the questions and receiving the answers, I prompted the participant for any additional information to add to the responses.

In the closing statement, I thanked the participant for the interview and discussed the need for the follow-up interview after the job interview. The participant received instruction to call the researcher after the job interview to set up a follow-up interview to talk about the experiences and perceptions after the job interview. The participant received the initial reimbursement gift card by mail after the initial interview.

The participant received instructions to complete the follow-up interview by Skype. After the follow-up interview, I thanked the participant and instructed the PII to expect a gift card in the mail. The participant received follow-up information on the procedures for privacy regarding the data gathered. The participant received my contact information and information on receiving a copy of the transcribed data for participant review that should take approximately 60 minutes to review for accuracy and a summarized copy of the study upon completion.

#### ***Follow-Up Plan If Recruitment Resulted in Too Few Participants***

When the sampling strategy resulted in too few participants to reach saturation, I returned to other program directors to ask for permission to display a subsequent flyer to solicit additional participants. After re-posting the flyer, I requested a change in recruitment procedures to allow online recruitment. After receiving participants, I asked each participant to recommend participants that fit the participant criteria due to the snowball sampling strategy selected for the study to offset the need for seeking additional

means of promoting the flyer online. I asked all participants to provide my contact information to all other possible participants to ensure a sufficient number of volunteers.

### ***Exiting the Study***

At the end of each interview, I thanked the participant for participating in the study and provided the participant with an explanation of the study design and methods used in the construct of the study. I asked for and answered any questions that the participant had pertaining to the study and reiterated the voluntary nature of the study with the right to withdraw from the study, if desired. I provided the participant with the contact information for any later questions and asked the participant for contact information to receive the transcript to review for accuracy and a summarized copy of the study results.

### **Interview Protocol**

#### ***Interview Protocol With the Consent Form Sent to the Participants***

I sent each consenting participant a copy of the interview protocol that included the informed consent form. The protocol included background information, procedures, sample questions, the voluntary nature of the study, and risks and benefits of participation. The form provided an overview of the incentives for participation, privacy concerns, and my contact information. The research study invitation and IRB approved informed consent form (IRB approval number 07-14-20-0528932) came from a template provided by Walden University (Center for Research Quality, 2019).

### ***The Creation of Other Data Sources and Reflections***

The use of journaling throughout the research process helps the researcher to acknowledge values, opinions, and insights for transparency. During the current study, I created a journal to address the study's progress in the interviewing stage. In the recruitment process, the journal entries served as reflections on the process of acquiring participants and the interactions with the participants. Journal entries during the interviews highlighted the interview interactions and reactions of the participants in the process, along with reflections of the encounters. The procedure of taking notes while the participants respond to the questions helped in the development of categories and themes. The notes also highlighted the emphasis that each participant placed on specific concepts. The notes helped to clarify possible interjections of emotion, hesitation, and the need for probing questions. A recording of each interview occurred to ensure the accuracy of the data collection and documentation. I asked the PII for permission to record the interview and explained the need to record for transcription accuracy.

### ***The Basis for Interview Protocol Development***

The questions for the study had a basis in the concepts of prisonization as an adaptation to prison life that works counter to the acquisition of social skills necessary to complete the interview process that most employers deem necessary to establish a fit for a particular job (Aysina et al., 2016; Bandura, 1977; Barak-Glantz, 1983). The questions within the study allowed the PII to describe the perceptions and experiences of the interview process through questions on preincarceration, incarceration, and postincarceration experiences. The practice sessions with peer-researchers (using the

developed questions in Appendix A) helped to refine the questions. I ensured that the questions aligned with the concepts, theoretical framework, and construct of the study (Connell et al., 2018). After the refinement of the questions and conducting the interviews, the analysis process occurred.

### **The Data Analysis Plan**

The analysis process consisted of content analysis which is a method of interpreting the data by examining the documented interviews and journal entries for coding and categorization of the words, phrases, or themes (Biroscak et al., 2017; Nyamathi et al., 2016). Content analysis consists of conceptual analysis for amassing a count or tally of words, or phrase frequency in the development of concepts and relational analysis for determining the relationship of adjoining words to key concepts, words, and phrases (i.e., the developed concepts; CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). For the purposes of this study, I used conceptual instead of relational analysis. Conceptual analysis consists of eight steps that include determining the extent of the coding (e.g., coding words or phrases), frequency or existence of concepts and ways to distinguish those concepts and developing rules for coding and handling irrelevant information or codes, beginning the coding, and analyzing the data (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). This study used the concept of coding words and phrases and maintained a maximum number of 10 concepts with the categorization of codes within those concepts. The study used frequency coding and categorization according to the meaning each code represented to distinguish between those codes. After interview transcription, I manually coded, categorized, organized, and analyzed the transcripts using an iterative approach in

the analysis process to add trustworthiness (Kahlke, 2014; Weller, 2018). The manual coding process consisted of line-by-line color-coding into categories in a Microsoft Word document with additional notes on the side to document the codes into categories. I used an Excel spreadsheet to document notable quotes from each participant for each interview question. A second Excel spreadsheet contained the transcript notes and categories for each concept for each participant along with the codes and relevant quotes. The eight steps in the conceptual analysis process of the content analysis strategy provided the analysis process and results of the data.

The first step in the conceptual analysis is to determine whether to code for words, phrases, or a combination of prevalent words and phrases in the data (Nyamathi et al., 2016). The code for words, phrases, and sentences occurred in this study. The second step encompassed determining how to develop the number of concepts for the study. A researcher can have a pre-determined set of concepts or allow the coding process to develop the concepts (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). In this instance, the concepts developed in the coding process which aligned with the objective of the study determined the number of concepts for the study which was a total of 10 concepts. The third step in the process was to determine whether to account for concept frequency or the existence of the concept (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). Locating the concept (e.g., concept existence) does not require a count, even though concept frequency would allow for a count of the frequency of the same concept (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). I used concept existence to document the presence of a given concept without maintaining a count of the same concept.

The fourth step defines how to develop concepts (CSU, 2019; Nyamathi et al., 2016). Coding for words and forms of the root-words occurred along with documenting phrases with like-meaning to form categories to include in the concept development. The fifth step defined the rules for coding the data, while the sixth step determined steps for handling irrelevant codes that the use of an Excel spreadsheet accommodated. The rules for coding the data included the assignment of a number to the interview notes and ensuring that the beginning of the audio recording had a notation of the identifying number (e.g., 101 or 102) to ensure that the interview notes coincided with the participant and matched the audio recording. I stored the names assigned to each number in a computer file that lacked access to the internet.

I used an audio recording to transcribe the questions and responses to each question in a word document. After transcribing all audio recordings, I used the line numbering feature in the word document to number each line of transcript for coding. I used the previously mentioned manual coding process to document and organize the codes in two Excel spreadsheets for comparative and cross analysis in the second stage of the coding. I used the same method of transcribing the interview notes for each participant using a word document and line numbering feature for numbering the lines in the word document.

The codes that seemed irrelevant to the present study and significant for use in a future study received documentation in a Microsoft Word document that remained separate from the documents relevant for this study. The seventh step was to code the data, while the eighth step was the analysis of the codes and explanation (CSU, 2019;

Nyamathi et al., 2016). In the analysis process, precautionary measures to maintain the integrity of the process, and the findings took precedence.

In essence, the analysis consisted of an inductive approach of dissecting and categorizing the data to provide a summation of the findings while connecting those finding to the objective of the study using the manual form of organizing, sectioning, coding, and storing the data (described in Chapter 4; Kahlke, 2014; Kahlke, 2018; Liu, 2016). To create and establish trustworthiness in the study (e.g., throughout the interview and analysis process), the framework consisted of built-in measures to establish credibility, transferability, confirmability, and reliability.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### ***Credibility (Internal Validity)***

Credibility consists of determining the internal validity of qualitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Shenton, 2004). I took samples at different times and days to provide a form of credibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Shenton, 2004). The use of a reflexive journal throughout the study to reflect on the recruitment and analysis process by keeping a log of those activities adds to the credibility of the study (Dodgson, 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Due to the unbound nature of this generic design, the creation of the reflexive journal and audit trail added further detail in the research process and rigor in the study.

Using member checks allowed the interview participants to check the accuracy of and validate the transcribed observations and interviews responses for accuracy (Kahlke, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Morse, 2015). Allowing the participants to check the

transcriptions ensure that the researchers capture the actual meanings for a more accurate analysis process. Peer examination or audits and debriefings are other methods of ensuring credibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Morse, 2015). During the interview, reframing interview questions was a way to check for inconsistencies and structural coherence of the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This study made use of built-in credibility checks (i.e., member checks and peer debriefings) within the framework and research design to ensure the quality of the research. Nyamathi et al. (2016) discussed the use of debriefing the participant after the interview process to establish credibility, which was a part of the interview procedures.

### ***Transferability***

Transferability includes adding the behavior, experiences, and context of the participants to provide the reader with added meaning and understanding (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Providing the documentation from notations during the interview and integrating that information into the analysis provided a clearer view of the participants during the interview process for the readers. Transferability consists of providing thick descriptions which are specific and concrete by contextualizing observations for sample generalization and external validity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Providing detailed accounts of the field experiences of the cultural and social experiences and coding process allows the reader to determine if the findings seemed transferable to other times, places, or individuals (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability determines if the findings are meaningful, beneficial, and transferable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

### ***Dependability***

Dependability refers to consistency and the replicability of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Shenton, 2004). I remained consistent throughout the study with methods and approaches used during data collection and analysis. The use of data collection, coding, and analysis methodology remained consistent throughout the study. The use of recorded interviews provided dependability by allowing peer researchers to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions and interpretation of the data (Nyamathi et al., 2016). Using external or internal auditors (i.e., peer examinations) to challenge the process and findings, helped in determining dependability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Different researchers to review the coding and analysis of the data to determine commonalities (i.e., investigator triangulation), then recoding the data to find inconsistencies were other approaches used in this study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability and confirmability consider whether the findings are transferable to the other situations and contexts of the reader (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). By including detailed descriptions of the processes in the study, I established rigor in the study, which increased the chances of transferability (Liu, 2016).

### ***Confirmability***

Confirmability considers the neutrality or objectivity of the researcher to allow the participant a voice to provide rich and detailed data (Bleiker et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). A confirmability check for the researcher's ontology in the process considers data, investigator, and methods triangulation, and the completion of a reflexive journal to write about the data collection process to maintain a consciousness of the

research process (Bleiker et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Morse, 2015). The use of investigator triangulation and reflexive documentation added to the confirmability of the present study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Morse, 2015). Kahlke (2014) discussed the use of an audit trail to document the steps taken and the process used that helps to detail the generic qualitative process for transparency and confirmability. An audit trail helped in the detailing and articulation of the data collection and analysis process for transparency and confirmability.

### ***Intracoder Reliability***

I maintained reliability in the study by maintaining consistency in the methodological procedures. By using the same data collection, transcription, coding, and analysis process for all participants' responses, the reliability of the study increased (Morse, 2015). The purpose of ensuring reliability is to structure the study so that someone outside the study could repeat the study using the same procedures and get the same results after duplication (Morse, 2015). However, the study required additional safeguards beyond reliability to ensure the ethical treatment of the participants and practices within the study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethics considers the moral decisions in qualitative research and the harm that might occur, and the need to protect the participant (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). The researcher needs to seek to do no harm and determine how to manage the dilemma of protecting the participant (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). Informed consent was necessary that included an explanation of the study, the benefits of the study with a sample of the

questions, and a section stressing voluntary participation before the study occurred (Ngozwana, 2018). The researcher needs to explain the procedures to protect privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity (Ngozwana, 2018). Ensuring that the participants understood the benefits of the study helped to minimize harm to the participant (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Ngozwana, 2018). The participant needed to feel comfortable with not answering any question deemed offensive or that might cause discomfort. Explaining the confidentiality safeguards and policies and the ways to prevent others from accessing the information was a way to put the participant at ease about sharing information necessary to answer the research questions (Grossoehme, 2014). The researcher should not increase the existent risk or invade the privacy of the participant in the study (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Ngozwana, 2018). Ensuring the previously mentioned ethical standards within the study ensured the protection of the participants' privacy and confidentiality, and the attempt to not cause any added harm to the participant.

The ethical challenges in qualitative studies consist of guiding principles for making the right decisions that require weighing the outcome according to the situation (Block, 2014; Doyle & Buckley, 2017). A researcher needs to consider the influences of the cultural context and societal norms in addressing ethical challenges (Misselbrook, 2015). The framework provided a means to contemplate and incorporate ethical considerations into the research process and design (Ngozwana, 2018). The researcher should respect the participant and ensure that the participant participates voluntarily without feeling coerced or bribed when providing the data for the study to offset the acquisition of false data (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Grossoehme, 2014). The questions

were clear, concise, open-ended, and not leading. The coding process remain consistent throughout the study with an adherence to the same approaches and methods designed within the study, which included the coding and the analysis process (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). In the present study, I exercised consideration for the cultural context and societal norms regarding PII by allowing video interviews for the PII at a location of their choice for PII comfort and privacy. Each participant received instruction on the voluntary nature of the study in the consent form, before the interview, and in debriefing.

The researcher needs to seek consultation and guidance during the research process and include safeguards for the psychological and emotional well-being of the participants, seek to do no harm, and cause no disruptions to the lives of the participants during observations due to the possible disruptions obscuring the clarity of the phenomenon and data (Annas, 2014; Doyle & Buckley, 2017). I consulted with and adhered to the guidance of peer and supervising researchers and set interview appointments to accommodate the PII. Another challenge with attempting to offset any harm to a participant is not knowing what wording, question, document, or picture might be disturbing or cause distress to the participant (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). The inclusion of the number to a counselor in the consent form was an attempt to offset any undue harm to the participant. The need to stress the participant's ability to disregard a question or stop the interview process if at any time the questions or process caused distress were possible safeguards from unnecessary or additional harm to the participant (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). The inclusion of the ability to refuse to answer any question and to stop

the interview at any time was a part of the introduction to the interview in this study for ethical purposes (Doyle & Buckley, 2017).

The researcher should provide information on the purpose of the study in the consent form before the interview and acquire informed consent before beginning the data collection (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). The participants in this study received information on the purpose of the study and the right to stop the interview at any point. The researcher needs to honor any commitment to time, confidentiality, anonymity, and respect the responses and stories of the participants that entrust those stories with the researcher (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Ngozwana, 2018). The researcher needs to report all findings and errors honestly, even if the findings contradict the researcher's ontology or do not support the theory within the theoretical framework. The researcher should collect no data before IRB approval (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). After receiving IRB approval to conduct the study (e.g., IRB approval number 07-14-20-0528932), I began the data collection process. I provided all IRB approved documents as attachments at the end of this document. I adhered to the agreed-upon time constraints and appointment times, confidentiality, privacy, and ethical reporting and data collecting practices required to meet ethical standards within this study.

Other ethical challenges in qualitative research are confidentiality and anonymity, which some individuals group together (Roth & von Unger, 2018). However, Roth and von Unger (2018) discussed the difference between the confidentiality of private information and anonymity that warrants a need to eliminate distinguishing details from the data. The protection of privacy applies to an individual's right to control what other

people know about the PII to maintain the confidentiality of data (i.e., the security of records and private information; Ngozwana, 2018; Roth & von Unger, 2018).

Appropriate settings and locations for interviews are necessary to ensure privacy during the sharing of information and experiences (Roth & von Unger, 2018). One of the challenges to confidentiality is the need to share the data with all researchers involved in the study and possibly external or internal peer examiners for credibility (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). Even though anonymity is an ethical requirement, complete anonymity in some different settings (e.g., focus groups, or observations when the researcher is a participant) and under many conditions is difficult (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Roth & von Unger, 2018). However, no one outside of the research study and university had access to the data for the purposes of confidentiality and the elimination of distinguishing details from the data took precedence.

The researcher should not increase any existent risk or invade the privacy of the participant in the study (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Ngozwana, 2018). I attempted to avoid increasing any risk or invade the privacy of the participants by following the guiding principles mentioned before. As the researcher, consideration for the influences of the cultural context of the transitional program facility and societal norms of the stigma attached to having a criminal record fostered the decision to hold the interviews by video application at the discretion and desired location of the participant. The above ethical consideration was inclusive in the framework of the study design (Ngozwana, 2018). As the researcher, I ensured that the participant understood the voluntary nature of the study

and did not feel coerced or bribed into participation to offset the acquisition of false data (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Grossoehme, 2014).

The questions included clear, concise, open-ended, and nonleading wording (Weller et al., 2018). The semistructured nature of the interview process allowed for probing questions (i.e., to extend the participant responses) for rich, detailed data (Weller et al., 2018). The coding process remained consistent throughout the study to adhere to the same approaches and methods throughout the study, which included the coding and analysis process (Doyle & Buckley, 2017).

Storing information on unprotected computers or any electronic device require additional safeguards. Storing information on a device with no internet connection was a part of protecting the data in this study (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). The use of the video interviews negated the inhibitions that might have come from others knowing about the type and nature of study and having knowledge of the participants that might have produce a stigmatizing experience or led to some form of discrimination (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Misselbrook, 2015). Addressing the issues of trustworthiness and ethics within this study helped to offset the possibility of causing harm to the participants while attempting to gather rich and detailed sufficient data to answer the research question.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the purpose, methodology, procedures, and guidelines within the framework of the study. The purpose of this generic qualitative research design was to explore the experiences and perceptions of a (PII) after participation in a transitional program and after a job interview. This chapter provided the

rationale for using the generic qualitative research study design to explore the PII's' experiences and perceptions and addressed the role and possible biases within the research process. The target population and the criteria for participant selection and the sampling strategy (purposeful snowball sampling) were key sections within this chapter (Ngozwana, 2017). The importance and use of the practice sessions to refine the questions and framework of the study were determining factor in the refinement within the methodology section of the study. In addition, the development of the questions stemmed from an exhaustive review of the literature. The study used semistructured face-to face interviews by video application to acquire the data. Interview data, reflexive journal, and interview notes provided the data for the study with the knowledge that I was the primary instrument as the interviewer. I constructed an audit trail to detail the methodological process.

This study used Microsoft Word documents and Excel spreadsheets for transcription, manual coding, and organizing the codes and data, and the use of content analysis in the analysis process (Alameddine et al., 2016). One of the final sections in this chapter addressed the different aspects of establishing trustworthiness in the study built into the construct of the research study's design. Finally, the need existed to provide a discussion of the possible ethical consideration within the study due to the study's design and participant pool. The details within this proposal provided an introduction, background information, and explanation of the methodology of the proposed study to allow PII's to describe the experiences and perceptions regarding the interview process.

The following chapter provides the data analyzed from the participant transcriptions. The chapter contains an introduction, explanation of the setting, the demographics of the participants, data collection and analysis processes, steps to ensure trustworthiness, the analyzed data organized by interview questions, and a summary of the chapter.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this generic qualitative research design was to explore the experiences and perceptions of PIIs after participation in a transitional program and before and after a job interview. The study allowed the participants to provide detailed information on preincarceration, incarceration, and postincarceration experiences with the interview process and finding jobs. The study also allowed the PIIs to describe their experiences of interviews and finding jobs after release and participation in a transitional program. Chapter 4 provides information on data collection, organization, and management, as well as the data analysis process. The interview questions elicited the responses necessary to answer the research question.

The research question was as follows: What are the experiences and perceptions of the job interview process for an adult PII who served a prison sentence of 5 or more years and participated in a transitional program?

The participants' responses revealed patterns of emerging themes that aligned with and answered the research questions. Chapter 4 contains an introduction to the study that provides the purpose of the study and the research question, along with a description of the method of testing the interview questions for effectiveness. The chapter also includes a description of the setting for the study and the demographics of the participants. The chapter's data collection section states the frequency and timeframes of the interviews. Additionally, I acknowledge variations to the procedures stated in the previous chapter and explain the circumstances that required those variations. The

chapter's data analysis section provides a detailed report of the process for developed codes, categories, and themes, followed by details of trustworthiness addressed in the study. The results section provides the research question and an outline of each interview question and developed theme with direct quotes from each participant, followed by a summary of the responses.

### **Setting for the Study**

After receiving IRB approval to conduct the study (IRB approval number 07-14-20-0528932), I began the data collection process. This study took place during the unusual circumstances of a global pandemic that began in the beginning months of 2020. Many individuals had to obey lockdown orders from public officials to offset the spread of COVID-19 (Boman & Gallupe, 2020). Initially, the study was to include face-to-face, in-person interviews. However, due to pandemic lockdowns and social-distancing measures that required individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart and wear face masks, I had to change the procedures to conduct the interviews by video using an application called Skype. Even though I changed the interviewing procedures to eliminate face-to-face, in-person contact, the pandemic created additional issues for conducting the study, in that it left many people unemployed and businesses closed.

### **Challenges to Previously Incarcerated Individuals Acquiring Interviews for Employment**

During the pandemic, many people became unemployed as businesses continued to cut back on staff and employees in the effort to continue operations. Many fast-food and dine-in restaurants and bars, cleaners, barbers, beauty salons, and retail stores closed

their doors to adhere to lockdown laws, leaving many individuals unemployed with limited opportunities to acquire interviews for new employment (Dey & Loewenstein, 2020). Other businesses used limited staff consisting of work-from-home employees to continue business operations.

Studies have shown that PIIs have challenges finding employment due to having a criminal background; many employers deny PIIs the chance for an interview when these individuals acknowledge a felony conviction on an application (Griffith & Young, 2017; Solinas-Saunders et al., 2015). The pandemic environment created additional challenges for PIIs seeking an interview or a job after completing a transitional program due to business closures and employee cutbacks. In addition, many of the transitional program facilities closed to the public and halted in-person transitional training programs until they could develop a sufficient online program substitute, or the pandemic diminished. The criteria for participants in this study specified that each PII needed to have completed a transitional program after release in order to take part in the initial interview and needed to have completed a job interview before taking part in a second study interview. The environment presented challenges for those PIIs who needed employment and thus created difficulty in conducting this study, due the scarcity of PIIs who fit the participation criteria in my local area.

### **Challenges and Alternatives to the Study's Recruitment Process**

When many local transitional program facilities discontinued services due to the pandemic, my supervising faculty advised me to submit a change of recruitment procedures form to the IRB. I submitted a change of procedures form to the IRB to allow

online recruitment. I acquired IRB approval to recruit PIIIs online through Facebook by creating a Facebook page for the approved flyer. This process broadened the geographic range of participating PIIIs to the United States. I promoted the Facebook page to my Facebook friends and groups that assisted PIIIs. I received two participant who provided a referral and access to other participants by making use of the snowballing method of sampling.

### **Demographics**

The four participants in this study were residents of Florida, West Virginia, Louisiana, and North Carolina. The participants' ages ranged from 33 to 39 years, with a mean age of 37. They reported varying sentence lengths ranging from 5 to 12 years. The participants were all African American males. The type of transitional program completed varied among participants. Program types included college courses, vocational rehabilitation, and reentry programs. Time since release also varied among participants. I allowed for participants who had been released less than a year from the inception of the study in order to broaden the selection of participants, due to the scarcity of participants who fit the original criteria of having been release 6 months or less from the inception of the study.

### **Data Collection**

I did not make use of a pilot study, even though measures to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the interview questions required practice sessions. The interview questions, developed from an exhaustive search of the literature, revealed concepts used as the basis for the interview questions and guided development. To test the interview

questions' effectiveness and clarity, I asked peer reviewers to critique and revise the questions. Two volunteer peer reviewers provided feedback on the questions after participating in mock interviews. After considering the need to restate many of the questions for clarity, I determined that it was necessary to simplify the interview questions. The revised interview questions contained concise, simple terms and were free of jargon. The refinement of the questions yielded rich, detailed data when accompanied by prompts for additional information to clarify PII's responses and provide further details and examples. The setting for this study required additional explanation regarding the current events that produced adverse circumstances for recruitment and the possible adverse effects on the PII's experiences and perceptions in that environment.

The data from this study came from semistructured face-to-face online interviews with the participation of four volunteer PII's. After receiving the initial approval from the IRB to proceed with recruitment, I moved forward with the initial plan to approach the program director of a local transitional program for permission to post the recruitment flyer. The facility had a closed sign on the door due to COVID-19 lockdowns. Therefore, this effort yielded no response. I located another transitional program facility and approached the managing director for permission to post the flier. The managing director was receptive to posting the flyer. However, after weeks with no response to the flyer, I verified that the facility was under quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19. After these futile attempts at recruitment, I took the previously described steps to change recruitment procedures to allow online recruitment, which provided the needed participants.

The participants used the contact information provided on the flyer to make initial contact with me. I then worked with the participants to set appointments for the interviews. After our initial contact, each PII received the informed consent form with sample questions by email. Interested participants consented to participation with an email response of “I consent.” All participants received instructions to download Skype and provide a good day and time to conduct the interview at their convenience. The interview times varied throughout the day and week. I conducted each interview in the privacy of my home office, and each participant chose a private location for personal use for the interview. The average duration of the initial interview was 30 minutes, and the average duration of the follow-up interview (after the completion of a job interview) was 15 minutes. Appendix A contains a copy of the interview questions.

Each participant answered questions after participating in a transitional program and answered subsequent questions after a job interview. All participants had participated in a transitional program before the completion of the first interview. The initial interview consisted of questions about preincarceration, incarceration, and transitional or postincarceration experiences. After the completion of a job interview (after transitional program participation), each PII participated in a second interview to answer questions about the job interview process and getting the job, if applicable. Only three of the PII's acquired employment. However, one of the three who acquired employment lost the job after only 2 days due to the background check and not declaring a felony conviction during the hiring process.

Data saturation occurs when no new themes develop in a data collection process that yields robust and detailed data to answer the research question and understand the research phenomenon (Kahlke, 2017). Having a small sample size requires thick, rich responses, which may be achieved by prompting the participant for salient items and sufficient sample efficiency (Kahlke, 2017; Weller et al., 2018). After each question, the participants received prompts to provide additional clarification. I presented subsequent questions by rewording the applicable question or restating a response to ensure the clarity of the responses (Arsel, 2017; Weller et al., 2018). The questions and prompts allowed the participants to elaborate and provide depth to their responses on their experiences and perceptions until they produced no new salient items. In this way, I was able to achieve saturation with the small sample size.

Before beginning the interviews, all participants received instructions indicating that they could omit any question that seemed offensive, withdraw from the interview at any time (due to the voluntary nature of the study), or save any question for the end of the interview that needed additional thought. All participants responded to the same basic questions presented in Appendix A. I allowed all participants to add any comments they wished to make at the end of the interview. Using the recording feature on Skype, I created an audio recording of each interview. I used the recordings to manually transcribe the interviews in a Microsoft Word document to ensure accuracy. Following the transcription of the interview responses, the participants received a copy of the transcription to ensure its accuracy before data analysis began.

## Data Analysis

The data analysis process for this study consisted of inductive (open) coding and content analysis for analyzing words, phrases, and sentences (Biroscak et al., 2017; Liu, 2016; Nyamathi et al., 2016). I used manual coding and an iterative approach to coding the data in a Microsoft Word document (Kahlke, 2014; Weller, 2018). Before beginning the coding process, I read and reread the transcribed documents to become familiar with the data. When beginning the coding process, I used the line-by-line method of analyzing each word and phrase of the participants and coded those words and phrases within the Word document by using the highlighting and comment functions in Microsoft Word. After the initial round of coding, I went back through the codes to determine similar codes that might fit within specific categories. After categorizing each code, I assigned a color code to each category and moved to the next transcript for coding, using the same process as stated above. Upon completing the coding of the document, if the codes fit into the categories established from the previous transcript, I categorized the codes by color-coding the codes according to the category to which they fit. If a code produced a different category, then the new category received a different color code for the next transcription coding. I used this process throughout the coding of the transcriptions until I had completed all documents. After completing the coding and categorization for each document, I went back to each document (line by line) to check the coding and categorization for detail and accuracy. The coding and categorization of the transcriptions produced 10 categories listed below in an ordinal position according to the codes assigned in Table 1:

- possible effects of prisonization and prison life experiences
- experiences that effected self-efficacy
- preincarceration experiences
- possible psychological effects
- education acquisition
- experiences that affected self-esteem
- transitional program preparation
- interviewing skills knowledge
- results of declaring a felony
- entrepreneurial mindset

After coding all of the documents, I used an Excel spreadsheet to highlight and list all of the relevant quotes for each interview question for each participant that included the highlighted codes. I used a second Excel spreadsheet to organize the codes and quotes according to the categories for each participant. Table 1 shows the codes developed in each category. The Excel spreadsheets, along with the results in Table 1, helped in developing emergent themes along with four overarching themes for the study. The use of the iterative approach to coding and the inductive method of developing codes, categories, and concepts added to the trustworthiness of the study. To further ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis process, the construct of the study contained measures built into the framework of the study to establish credibility, transferability, confirmability, and reliability.

**Table 1***Codes in Each Category*

	Column A	Column B	Column C
Category 1	Comfort around other PIIIS	Uncertainty of reentry	Learned behaviors
Category 2	Confidence in self/no confidence in skills	Decreased confidence when felony declared	Increased confidence from job acquisition
Category 3	Previous job experience equates to a more positive reentry attitude		
Category 4	Perceptions of lower societal status	Expectations of failure	Find alternative to avoid an interview
Category 5	Self-taught	Preincarceration education	Incarceration and postincarceration education attainment
Category 6	Rejection lowers self-esteem	Job offers increase self-esteem	Rejection avoidance through entrepreneurship
Category 7	Inadequate transitional programs	Programs for practical skills	Programs that teach interviewing skills
Category 8	Questioning sincerity of interviewers	Self-motivation skills	Interview questions seen as biased or hard to answer
Category 9	Expectations of rejection	Felony seen as lifetime sentence	Acknowledgment of PII hardships boosts self-esteem
Category 10	Rejection leads to entrepreneurial mindsets	PIIs mentor other PIIIs to be entrepreneurs	

## **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

### **Credibility**

Credibility encompasses the internal validity of qualitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Shenton, 2004). When setting the interview appointments, the dates and times varied according to different times of the day and different days of the week. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I maintained a reflexive journal and an audit trail for accountability to ensure that my thoughts or biases were not reflected in the data collection or analysis process. The use of member checks allowed the participants to check the accuracy of the transcripts, which provided credibility to the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Shenton, 2004). After each question, I asked the participant for clarifying examples, restated the question differently, and restated some of the responses to the participant in the form of a question to ensure that I captured the meaning intended by the participant.

### **Transferability**

Transferability determines if the findings are meaningful, beneficial, and transferable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I recorded the interviews by using the recording feature on the Skype application to ensure accuracy during transcription. I asked each participant the same general questions and allowed sufficient time for the participant to answer and provided additional space for the participant to add any comments after responding to all the questions. I provided an explanation of the environment and current culture in the setting section of this chapter for clarity and transparency for the reader to determine the replicability of the study in other research studies.

**Dependability**

Dependability refers to the consistency within the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I used the same approach and detailed that approach for replicability. The audio recording of the interview and participant checks ensured the accuracy of the transcribed data. I manually transcribed each interview to ensure accuracy. I manually coded, analyzed, and organized the data to ensure detailed coding of the data.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability considers the neutrality or objectivity of the researcher to allow the participant to describe experiences and perceptions for rich, detailed data (Bleiker et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the data analysis process, I used the inductive process in analyzing the data provided by the participants only. I was careful to remain objective and neutral throughout the recruitment, data collection, and data analysis process. The use of investigator triangulation provided a means for confirmability of the results of the study.

**Results From the Data**

The interviews consisted of 13 questions developed to answer the research question. Each participant provided responses to the same 13 questions with subsequent prompts to ensure thick, rich, and detailed data. The four participants completed the interviews and answered questions regarding preincarceration, incarceration, and postincarceration experiences that pertained to the interview and locating employment. No participant omitted any questions. Each participant used the option to provide

additional comments at the end of the interview that provided additional data used to answer the research question which was the following: What are the experiences and perceptions of the job interview process for an adult PII who served a 5 or more-years prison sentence and participated in a transitional program? The analysis of the data produced four overarching themes which were as follows: (a) inadequate transition programs leave PIIs unprepared for the interview process and mental challenges of rejection due to having a criminal record; (b) employer rejection affects self-esteem and self-efficacy, leading to rejection avoidance, entrepreneurial mindset development, entrepreneurial ventures, and mentoring others in job acquisition skills and entrepreneurship; (c) preincarceration and incarceration experiences affect postincarceration experiences; and (d) prisonization affects social identity. The following sections will provide the responses from the participants that helped in the development of the themes.

### **Theme A: Inadequate Transitional Programs Leave Previously Incarcerated Individuals Unprepared for Reentry**

The first theme stated that inadequate transitional programs leave PIIs unprepared for the interview process and mental challenges of rejection due to having a criminal record. Each participant participated in and completed a different type of transitional program to assist in employment acquisition and the responses from three of the participants seemed negative. However, PII-3 had a favorable assessment of the transitional program that provided sufficient training to complete the interview process with positive results.

### ***Transitional Program Experiences and Inadequacies for the PII***

The transitional programs for each of the PIIs provided varied experiences that ranged from effective and adequate to insufficient and inadequate training to prepare the PII for the interview process and employment acquisition. PII-3 responded with no negativity regarding the training received in the transitional program and stated:

I learned how to fill out an application, how to dress, how to carry myself, and how to be courteous. You go through all those training sessions. Definitely how to carry yourself during the interview. They tell you to be fair and honest. It's something to help you build confidence in yourself to sit down and speak to the interviewer. I also went through a drug rehab program that prepared me for when I get out.

In addition, PII-3 talked about the knowledge of job limitations due to having a felony and stated:

I still had my issue with certain jobs that I wanted to do. I am thankful for the rejection. Even though with going through rehabilitation and being clean, I thought that it wouldn't affect me, but it still does.

The other three participants considered the programs inadequate for developing the skills necessary to complete an interview and secure a job. PII-1 stated, "I did a 22-week program that allowed me to receive a trade certification, but I didn't use it." PII-2 state that the half-way house in which he had lived provided some instruction on how to dress, fill out the application, and write resumes along with some college courses on

presentation and stated, “There are things set up to help people, but a lot of the access to those things are restricted.” PII-2 talked about being unprepared for reentry and stated:

I don’t understand why that is their underlying message like they want people to get out and be product citizens when they are detained but they don’t want to provide you with the training that you need once you are released. It’s all about money and access and the people that restrict the access.

PII-4 acknowledged the participation in a vocational rehabilitation program and stated, “but there was no job training program” to assist in the interview process. PII-3 was the only participant that encountered a program that provided interviewing skills training that the participant deemed as adequate. PII-4 stated that work release program participation required no application or interviewing process. The PII stated that the authorities simply put the PII to work that created an unrealistic view of work opportunities upon reentry by stating:

Primarily, you don’t know when you come out that they are not going to hire you. When you tell them that you ‘ve been convicted of a felony. There is no preparation for that. All of us know that once you tell any employer that, unless they have been approved by the state and they are receiving funding, they are not going to hire you. They are not going to hire you and they are not prepared for that. You are not prepared for that because nobody tells you that your criminal record is going to follow you where ever you go for the rest of your life. There is no relief for you.

According to the PIIs' perceptions of inadequacy of the programs, the programs not only lacked effective training in practical and soft skill acquisition, the programs also lacked an essential component to address the psychological needs of the PII.

### ***The Unaddressed Mental Challenges of the PII***

As the PII discussed the transitional program effectiveness, they highlighted the unaddressed and untreated mental issues and challenges that they continue to endure. As PII-1 discussed the mental challenges of reentry, the participant stated, "There is nothing to help you to deal with depression and no programs and nothing in the social services to address the mental illness and impact of mental illness on your psychic and health." PII-1 talked extensively about the mental challenges that PII face that many transitional programs failed to address regardless of the preparation for the interview, or how much confidence a PII has and stated, "all your self-doubt comes back to the surface." The PII also stated that many PII have mental issues that no one addresses while imprisoned and no programs exist to help the PII with pre-existing or reentry mental challenges. When PII-2 responded to the question of thoughts, feelings, and preparedness for going to an interview, the PII stated:

It would be difficult, but honestly, I would feel confident in my teachings and what I have instilled in myself and confident in who I am. But, in regards to having the skills that I need to be productive once I was released from prison, no.

PII-4 discussed the many PII that he befriended and talked about their frame of mind due to the unpreparedness for reentry and stated that "they don't know how to adapt and they losing their minds." PII-1 stated, "we are suffering and black people are suffering

from mental illness in this country anyway, but when you go to prison it may be detected or undetected.” Along with the unaddressed psychological issues of the PII, the PII questioned the motives of the job interviews.

### *The PII's Doubts of Employers' Willingness to Hire PII*

The PII in this study questioned the sincerity and willingness of a hiring manager to consider hiring a PII during the job interview entering or completing the interview. Three of the PII talked about the sincerity or willingness of the interviewer to consider hiring a PII made the PII feel as though the interview was a waste of time. PII-1 stated an uncertainty about the interviewers sincerity and stated, “I would be looking at the interviewer skeptical and wondering to see if this person really wants to hire me or if this person is simply going through the numbers.” PII-2 talked about feelings while sitting in front of the interviewer and stated:

In the back of my mind, I was saying that you are just going to make up an excuse not to hire me. I felt like they were going to make up an excuse. I get that a lot. I don't know if it is due to the education, or what. I get that a lot.

When asked about the feelings and thoughts that occurred during the interview, PII-4 stated, “A waste of time. They already know whether they are going to hire you or not. I'm about to convey to this man all of my personal and private information just for them to reject me.”

When discussing the job interview and the possibility of getting the job, PII-2 stated, “I put the time and effort into educating myself and it seems like it is a lot easier for other people to get employment.” The PII seemed bewildered due to the awareness

that PIIIs have challenges getting employment after reentry, rehabilitation, and education acquisition and stated, “I don’t understand, I don’t know.” PII-4 discussed the feelings of uncertainty about going to a job interview, even though he talked of confidence and thinking highly of the self throughout the study and stated:

I felt uncertain. I knew that if I didn’t find work, then my options were going to be limited because I was staying with my parents. And at any given moment, uncertain, lack of power and self-confidence, kind of shaken because it’s hard to be certain because it is hard to be yourself when someone else is responsible for your outcome.

The negative perceptions of an impending interview and the experiences of the interview caused the PIIIs to avoid the interviews and seek alternative ways to acquire income.

### **Theme B: The Effect of Employer Rejection on the Previously Incarcerated Individual and Rejection Avoidance**

The second theme stated that employer rejection affects self-esteem and self-efficacy that leads to rejection avoidance, entrepreneurial mindset development, entrepreneurial ventures, and mentoring others in job acquisition skills and entrepreneurship.

#### ***PIIs’ Approach to Rejection Avoidance***

Within the developed theme, the concept of rejection avoidance stemmed from the methods or approaches used by the PIIIs to avoid the exposure to more rejection from employers by looking to other forms of employment and legally acquiring income, PII-1 talked about the preparation before going to the interview and stated, “it’s like planning

to lose so that you don't walk away defeated" due to the expectation of rejection. PII-4 talked about avoiding the declaration of a felony and stated:

I've always had that contention that I never put on a job application that I was convicted of a felony because I never was tried in a court where evidence was presented or judged by a jury of my peers. I was forced into a plea bargain, coerced, and I had to take it, because if I wouldn't have taken it, then my life would have been in the balance anyway.

In addition, PII-4 spoke of the uncertainty and apprehension of sharing private information with the hiring manager and stated, "I'm about to convey to this man all of my personal and private information just for them to reject me." After the rejection from the job that only lasted for 2 days, the PII went further to say that he no longer wanted to be subjected to the scrutiny and rejection by employers and stated:

The only way that I would ever go look for a job is if I know that I'm going to walk in there and they're going to hire me regardless, or I get a referral and they gone walk me though filling out the application that is just a formality. That's it, that is the only way that I am going to apply for a job, again. I'm never going to go sit in for a first and second interview, I don't care if they are paying \$100,000 a year to subject myself to that level of scrutiny only to be denied, it does something to your character and it makes you feel like you are lesser of a person than you believe yourself to be. You know. It's a hell of a thing.

Both PII-1 and PII-4 resolved to focusing on entrepreneurial ventures to offset the expectations from employers of rejection. However, the idea of consistent rejection and declaring a felony created an adverse effect to the PIIs' psychological wellbeing.

***The PIIs' Perceptions of Declaring a Felony that Equated to Automatic Rejection***

All the PII in this study discussed their feelings regarding having to declare a felony and their overall perceptions were negative with expectations of automatic rejection when declaring a felony. PII-1 talked about needing a job to meet probation requirements and told the story of going to a fast-food restaurant for a job and the manager stated that declaring a felony on the application would mean automatic rejection. PII-3 remained positive and talked with confidence throughout the interview. However, when asked about the thoughts of securing the job after the interview, PII-3 stated, "I did not think that I was going to get the job due to having to declare a felony and a lack of skills for the job." PII-1 stated that he made attempts to "remain legal," "productive," and "showing rehabilitation efforts," even though declaring a felony seemed to evoke an automatic rejection. PII-4 stated that a PII has a chance at employment unless the employer checks the criminal record. PII-4 stated:

You require me to go into my background, then I know that is when I am X-ed out. That's the most disadvantaged situation that the inmate face. Not that they don't qualify for the job, but that they can't even get the job. Once the background is brought into the forefront.

PII-2 mentioned an internship where the employer created a position with the company for the specific purpose of hiring the PII that lead to the PII's rejection due to the

background check. PII-2 voiced a feeling of validation from an authority figure to see the challenges of PII's regardless of the qualifications or suitability for the job, and stated, "I put the time and effort into educating myself and it seems like it is a lot easier for other people to get employment. It doesn't matter if they have the education or not."

PII-1 voiced similar feelings of validation from the probation officer that acknowledged the qualifications of the PII and the challenges that seemed undue. PII-1 stated that employer rejection is the "Achilles heel" of a felon and stated, "it takes all the air out of you" to remain honest and declare a felony then receive employer rejection. PII-1 also talked about the negative effect of persistently having to declare a felony as wearing a brand and "self-stigmatizing." With the perceived stigmatizing and negative effect of declaring a felony, the PII's turned to other legitimate means of income acquisition.

### ***The PII's' Entrepreneurial Mindset***

As previously stated, the PII's attempted to avoid rejection from employers by embracing other ventures and two of the PII's provided specific statements regarding an entrepreneurial mindset as an alternative to seeking employment. PII-1 stated, "I was convinced that I needed to work for myself after the interview." PII-4 talked about the minimum wage for many jobs that paid an insufficient amount to maintain the lifestyle desired, and stated, "at a young age I knew that I never wanted to work for anybody." In preparation for the interview, PII-1 stated, "When I get to the interview, I am prepared to represent myself, but I am aware that because of the felony, I will do well, but not get the

position.” In addition to acquiring an entrepreneurial mindset, the idea of teaching and mentoring other PIIs to start a business or get a job became a priority of the PIIs.

### ***PIIs Mentoring Other PIIs***

The idea of PIIs mentoring other PIIs stemmed from the need to see others success and benefit from acquired knowledge. PII-1 stated, “and I started coaching some of the other guys on probation on what they could say, and what they could do, and they would get jobs.” PII-3 talked about the interviewing knowledge acquired that allowed him to teach others. PII-3 stated, “I teach young people to be entrepreneurs, I can understand what they are going through. I can teach them how to prepare for interviews.”

### **Theme C: A Previously Incarcerated Individual’s Experiences Before and After Prison Affect the Reentry Process**

The third theme stated that preincarceration and incarceration experiences affect postincarceration experiences. Even though some of the incarceration experiences of the PIIs were similar, the preincarceration experiences varied which affected experiences upon reentry.

### ***The PIIs’ Preincarceration Experiences***

The preincarceration experiences of the PIIs in this study showed variations of family, life, and work experiences. PII-1 included working in the political arena, and ownership of a small business that provided the PII with preincarceration entrepreneurial experience. PII-1 stated that due to preincarceration entrepreneurial experiences before going to prison that working in the corporate world was not an option, and stated, “I would never go back into the corporate world, and I would never work for anyone else.”

Even though he stated a concern for earning enough money in the initial stages of starting a business, the PII remained persistence throughout the interviews of starting a business and spoke of beginning the process. The preincarceration experiences of PII-2 included applying for entrance in the Navy and being denied entrance after the exam. The PII stated:

I got denied entrance into the Navy, it was a dream of mine to go into the Navy because my grandfather he was in the Navy and he was killed in action in Vietnam And after I graduated, I got shot down during the physical training portion of the entrance exam. It really just sent me back to the streets.

PII-2 further stated that he had “been in the streets since 13 or 14” and stated that after the rejection from the Navy and going back into the streets that making money became a priority. The PII stated, “If I was gonna risk my life, I might as well risk my life making some money or something to let my kids have benefits.”

PII-4 stated that he had two jobs in the fast-food industry before going to prison and voiced a disdain for the idea of working to receive minimum wage. The PII stated:

Where I’m from, the only jobs that are available are fast food, the military, custodial work, teaching, or trades. If you were not in the refinery, you wouldn’t be able to earn a decent living. So, outside of drugs there was nothing out there to give you the lifestyle that you wanted to live. So, at a young age I knew that I never wanted to work for anybody, because I already knew that applying for a job would be a waste of time, because my Mom worked for minimum wage and most

of the people that I knew worked a minimum wage job that would barely allow them to pay their bills.

PII-4 further stated:

It something when you come from a family where no one has anything, and you are suppose to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, and when you get in trouble that is one of those things that send you further back into something that is already almost impossible to escape from in the first place.

PII-3 spoke of social supports and maintaining a job before prison. PII-3 stated:

I always kept a job. And the benefit to that was that most of the people that I dealt with before I fell off, they were in a position to give me a job. They were trying to help keep me off the streets.

PII-3 also stated that he had contract knowledge from working with a realtor and started a janitorial cleaning service before going to prison that became tedious and fraught with employee problems that led to the dissolution of the business.

PII-4 stated an awareness of the stereotypes early in life that come with having tattoos and mentioned a societal leniency for lighter-skinned people of color by stating:

I had friends that were darker than me, gold teeth, tattoos, they didn't get the job and we went through the same process. I think that most black men understand at an early age what they are up against in terms of behaviors that are rewarding and those that are punishable. The preincarceration experiences of the PIIs had an impact on the reentry experiences of the participants along with the experiences during incarceration that effected the reentry process.

The preincarceration experiences of the PIIIs were factors that added to the mindset of the PIIIs and extended to their incarceration experiences.

### ***The PIIIs' Incarceration Experiences***

Even though in-prison guidelines and structure seemed similar, some of the experiences for the participants of this study varied due to their education level. PII-1 stated, “the less education you had, there were more opportunities for you” regarding inmate programs, and “once you got a Bachelor’s or Master’s there are very limited opportunities for you unless you are paying for it yourself.” PII-1 also stated, “I taught myself how to do the law-clerk position and I assisted other inmates.” PII-1 discussed the postings on the wall of the prison that stated, “they do not participate in the rehabilitation of the inmates, but they do allow you to self-rehabilitate.” The participant talked about having access to books and voluntary programs that required a counselor’s referral to secure entrance into those programs. PII-1 and PII-4 mentioned the general education development (GED) programs. PII-4 stated that his initial incarceration occurred in a youth institution where he received his GED, then after reaching adulthood, transferred to an adult prison, where he was in a work release program that allowed the PII to leave the prison walls, work, then come back daily under supervision. PII-2 stated, “I began my transformation in prison, I was just doing a lot of praying, a lot of reading, a lot of research.” All the PIIIs talked about being self-taught, researching, and praying. PII-2 also stated:

I felt it was important for me to educate and train myself because they didn't provide the training for me to at least present myself in a positive light. You know

how you have to present yourself when we're talking to different people how our message can be diluted by the way that we communicate with people. I didn't feel that the training was adequate for what I wanted in life.

PII-3 stated that he read and wrote to pass the time. PII-4 talked about the need for compliance and his anti-authoritative mentality held before prison that older inmates helped to diminish. PII-4 also stated that he benefitted from a newly found religion and self-teachings and talked about the religion and access to information that he previously did not have. PII-3 talked about an incarceration drug rehabilitation program that helped to provide insight on how to remain drug-free upon release by avoiding negative influences. All the preincarcerated and incarcerated experiences of the PIIs were factors that effected the reentry process.

### *The PIIs' Postincarceration Experiences*

As the PIIs talked about postincarcerated experiences of the interviewing process, the preincarceration and incarceration experiences presented significant factors that affected the postincarcerated experience. PII-4 talked, the memories of the arrest and the judgment surfaced from the discussion of the job interview, and the PII stated:

Somebody would ask you questions that you know that you really couldn't answer. Like why was you in prison. I knew why I was in prison but I have always contended along with other men that was my age and boys that were getting locked up with me that if somebody would have gave us an opportunity, then we wouldn't have been locked up. All teenagers should be put in a workforce development program to prepare them for adult life. Other men my age with

different backgrounds, some different races that when they got in trouble, they were afforded an opportunity to get an attorney, to get probation, to get put in a diversion program.

PII-1 talked about some of the interviewer questions and stated that the interview might ask about strengths or weakness or things done to rehabilitate. The PII-1 stated that the questions seem hard to answer truthfully and stated:

In prison, everything that you do in prison is in the gray; when you internalize that negative behavior what you practice in prison is what you are going to do when you come home. Everything you do in prison is practice for when you get out.

Sleeping, eating, working out, reading, scamming, hustling, and working were some of the habits mentioned by the PIIs that follow the PII into reentry.

PII-1 and PII-3 stated that they prayed before going to the interview as a calming technique to bolster confidence, and even though PII-3 attended a transitional program that helped to build confidence and taught interviewing and job acquisition skills, the PII stated feelings of doubt about getting the job due to a relative voicing the challenges to employment and the PII's lack of skills to do the job. The PII stated, "I did not think I was going to get the job because they wanted operators and all my answers were no on the application" (e.g., referring to questions about skills and qualifications). PII-3 also mentioned the use of self-motivation by looking in the mirror and convincing the self of securing the job. The PII-3 stated that after prison, his nephew provided a place to stay with no demands as to finding employment or providing financial assistance to the

household. However, the PII found a job within months and used the skills taught during the interview. PII-3 stated:

The first thing that I did was I prayed, I got dressed and looked in the mirror, and I told myself, you are going to get this job. When I got to the door, I was stressing. I left all that stress at the door, went in and sat down and me and the plant manager had a great conversation and like I said, when I got home, they called me to start in 2 days. I took my physical and they told me that I would be off for the 2 days on that weekend and I would start on that Monday. It was something to do.

PII-1 developed the plans to create a business and never acquired a job. PII-2 received a job offer that conflicted with his college schedule which created a possible problem. PII-4 received a job and worked for 2 days before termination after the employer background check returned due to not declaring the felony on the application. However, the PII mentioned plans for a business venture to offset having to apply for another job. While divulging the experiences and the perceptions of the interview process during preincarceration, incarceration, and postincarceration, the PII's shared information that mirrored the effects of prisonization.

#### **Theme D: The Previously Incarcerated Individuals' Perceptions of Prisonization and the Effects on Social Identity**

The fourth theme states that prisonization affects social identity. The PII's provided responses and examples of prison experiences and the effects of prisonization. Two of the PII's talked extensively about the effects of prisonization and the identities

acquired in prison and upon release. PII-1 provided an example of a PII going on a date, and the woman persistently arriving at 6:15 p.m., even though the PII is accustomed to eating at 6:00 p.m. The PII stated that a PII would find it easier to switch to a woman that eats at 6:00 pm than to change ingrained habits, even though he cares deeply for the 6:15 p.m. woman. In addition, PII-1 stated:

When you come out with that system, you are that system, and you got to try to find a job to align with that system. Who you become in the prison is how you get your self-respect back. So, if you are the guy that wash everyone's tennis shoes or iron everyone's uniform, nobody can take that from you. You come home and you become just a PII in the street with no identity and you don't belong nowhere.

Even though PII-2 stated that society expects PII's to become productive citizens, The PII referred to all PII's as a "subgroup of people that traditionally don't have their message heard, don't have a platform or access to adequate resources." PII-4 talked about receiving the guidance from older inmates that had longer sentences and stated:

They kind of served as an incubator to protect me against certain things that I otherwise would have went up against unknowingly. I was really given foresight into situations and what the expectations was going to be. There is a certain behavior that is expected in prison, compliance, because I am an anti-authority figure. I like control over my life. Especially when I know somebody doesn't have my best interest at heart. So, if you are not compliant and you show any type of defiance, you are not going to get what you need to get through that process. That's in prison and out of prison. It is more obvious inside of prison than outside

of prison. So, you have to conform. So, they really do not give you any options, inside.

PII-4 went on to say that prison life mirrors life after prison with slight differences and stated:

Out here what they call the free world, you don't have to conform, but the options are still the same. You either work for minimum wage or you get locked up in the projects, low income housing where crime prostitution and other under-world activities take place. You know, so it is really the same, but if you conform, you know, if you do well in school, you don't show any resistance to the teachers and what they are telling you, if you are good in Sunday school, if go to school, pay your taxes, if you do everything they tell you, and you don't get into any trouble, they we will reward you because then you seem favorable.

PII-1 talked about the ability to observe a person and in minutes know that person. The PII stated:

If I talked to you for 15 minutes, I could tell you everything about yourself. You see in prison we have to quickly identify your habits. You see your habits are how you think. Your habits become what you do. You become your habits.

PII-4 talked about PIIs locked into a separate class of people and stated, "you are still going to be marginal but once you make a mistake, that's it. You are locked into a permanent underclass." The PII went on to discuss the feelings of animosity towards the justice system and the stagnation of growth and maturity due to being locked up at an early age. The PII stated:

They really took me away from development while all my peers were in college and in the workforce, I was in prison with hardened criminals. I developed a lot of attitude from what I learned from that influence because while they were learning about Aristotle and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. I was concerned with my survival and my basic needs being met. Just because you are in prison and they give you free cots and a hot, your basic needs still ain't met.

PII-4 also mentioned the caste system in prison and spoke of the "powerful" and the "powerless", in-prison slavery, exploitation, and extortion while incarcerated. The PII stated:

There are people that have power and the rest of the people are powerless amongst the inmates. You know who you can talk to, you know who you can affront. You know where you can get money from, you know where you can get commissary from, you know where you can get care packages from, you know that if you need to make a phone call, or if you need to write home and don't have stamps. There are people that come in there and they are just blocked out. They have no access to nothing.

PII-4 went on to say that the identity of the inmate determines the identity of the PII due to the caste system level held while incarcerated and stated:

It's like a self-fulfilling prophecy. The authorities know that they are coming back because on the inside they never got self-confidence. You bound to comeback. You ain't had nothing before you came to prison, you ain't had nothing while you were in prison, and when you get out, the only thing that you are offered is a

minimum wage job and it's going to take you anywhere from 6 weeks to 3 months before you can find decent employment and by the time you find it you done subjected yourself into owing everyone you know by begging, borrowing, or bribing and it's a never ending cycle. And that's 85% of the inmates; pre and post.

PII-1 discussed the inability of PII's to adjust to society and stated:

And what makes the guys reviolates is that they can't adjust to a system that they don't know nothing about. You going back to prison cause he can't make it, he's not going to make it anyway. He's not going to make it because he's already got a system that he's use to. Who you become in the prison is how you get your self-respect back. You come home and you become just a black man in the street with no identity and you don't belong nowhere, an again your biggest support is family but family is skewed based on who they think you are.

PII-4 went on to discuss the perceptions of the self and other PII's and stated:

Nobody has any concern for the least of these except by mouth, for the most part when you are at the bottom of the rank of the ladder of society, you are forgotten about. They don't know how to adapt and they losing their mind. And nobody cares because as long as you got a job, you could care less if I got a job.

PII-1 talked about the ease of identifying inmates relative to people on the outside of prison. The PII stated:

It's easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys, but you coming out into the streets that want to corrupt everybody. You are the guy that should have been in

prison, and some of them think that you the same guy, but whatever they think, it doesn't help the system that you've internalized.

The experiences and perceptions of the PIIIs provided a plethora of information on the interview process for the development of themes that provided an in-depth view into the feelings and thoughts of the PII. The data acquired from the PIIIs was sufficient to answer the research question.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the purpose of the study and the research question followed by the setting for the study. The setting required a detailed explanation due to the extenuating circumstances of the current environment that affected the recruitment process. The demographics section provided the age range, gender, location, and the number of volunteer participants in the study. The data collection process section highlighted the manual approach taken with an explanation of the steps in that process. The average amount of time for the interviews, frequency, and variations from the original plan for data collection was inclusive in the data collection section. The section also explains the approach used to test and refine the questions (i.e., peer reviewers) before the interviews to ensure thick, rich, and detailed data from the participants. The interview question refinement process produced simplified, jargon-free, and concise questions for data analysis.

The section on trustworthiness addressed credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. The use of investigator triangulation ensured the credibility of the study. The use of thick description ensured the transferability of the

study. The analysis of the participants' words eliminated bias or personal ontology from the results that provided confirmability. The consistency throughout the research process ensured dependability.

The data analysis section highlighted the content analysis method in analyzing the transcribed data. The organizing and storing of the data occurred manually by Excel spreadsheets to organize and store that data to ensure accuracy and detail. I provided a list of codes and categories used in the data analysis process. The interviews consisted of 13 basic questions followed by prompts for added detail to ensure clarity and details in the data. The outline of the results section contained the research question, overarching themes, and direct quotes from the participants. The themes were as follows: (a) inadequate transition programs leave PIIs unprepared for the interview process and mental challenges of rejection due to having a criminal record; (b) employer rejection affects self-esteem and self-efficacy, leading to rejection avoidance, entrepreneurial mindset development, entrepreneurial ventures, and mentoring others in job acquisition skills and entrepreneurship; (c) preincarceration and incarceration experiences affect postincarceration experiences; and (d) prisonization affects social identity.

The next chapter provides an overview of the purpose and nature of the study, a summary of the findings, and the interpretations of those findings. The chapter provides the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications for social change due to the results of the study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this generic qualitative research study design was to explore the experiences and perceptions of PIIs after participation in a transitional program and after a job interview. This study allowed the PIIs to describe personal experiences and perceptions of their acquired job interview skills, interview process, and acquisition of a job, when applicable. The PIIs shared information about preincarceration, incarceration, and postincarceration experiences that affected how they viewed the interview process or getting a job.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings from the data revealed that PIIs prepped for job interviews using self-motivation and prayer, as well as by remembering interviewing skills that they researched or were taught. PIIs questioned the willingness of their interviewers to hire a felon and described some of the job interview questions they received as paradoxical, without regard for the disparities in opportunities for African American males or the aspects of prisonization. PII-3 perceived that PIIs with trade skills experience had a better experience in the interview process, and PII-4 stated that in-prison favoritism led to referrals to ensure a job upon release. For each PII, job interview experiences and perceptions of the interview process held different yet similar meanings that were the product of many factors from before, during, and after incarceration.

## **Education Level and Attainment as an Insignificant Factor for Previously Incarcerated Individuals**

Previous job experience before incarceration provided a more positive attitude about getting a job and rejection irrelevant to education acquisition. Even though education was not a significant factor in participants' perceptions or experiences of the interview process, many of the PII's revealed that they conducted research and were self-taught through reading and research while in prison. PII-1 had a degree before incarceration, and PII-2 completed college after prison. PII-4 acquired a GED while in jail before being transferred to prison, and PII-3 had a high school diploma before incarceration. PII-2 talked about the unfair hiring practices of employers who seemed less concerned about the qualifications of a PII and more concerned about the total exclusion of PII's regardless of rehabilitation, education, or qualifications. Although education level or attainment did not significantly affect the PII's' experiences or perceptions, the experiences and perceptions of the PII's' affected the attainment and maintenance of self-efficacy and self-esteem.

## **The Previously Incarcerated Individuals' Experiences of Self-Efficacy and Self-Esteem Attainment**

The PII's in this study spoke of confidence in their personal appeal, character, ability, and self-teachings, and they described transitional programs that taught skills and provided experiences as affecting self-esteem. Only one PII highlighted the adequateness of the skills that the transitional program taught. However, the PII's lacked confidence in the skills necessary to do or get a job, with a further decrease in confidence in securing a

job when they had to declare a felony. Even though the PIIIs discussed diminished confidence due to having to declare a felony and having their fate in the hands of another, the PIIIs spoke of increased confidence after securing employment. PIIIs showed increased self-esteem after being offered or securing a job. In contrast, they described lowered self-esteem when they were rejected for a job and were consistently reminded of being a felon; this experience decreased their desire to look for employment thereafter. The PIIIs' responses regarding the job interview process and rejection provided insight into their mindset, which was a product of influences and experiences before, during, and after incarceration.

### **The Prison Experiences of the Previously Incarcerated Individual Relative to Prisonization**

PIIIs internalized learned behaviors seen as prison habits that remained upon reentry that either provided positive or negative reentry experiences. All of the PIIIs talked about conducting research and learning while in prison. PII-2 mentioned a positive transformation that occurred while in prison, even though he stated that no in-prison programs adequately prepared him for the challenges of life. PII-3 spoke of in-prison programs that had a positive effect on his thought process. PII-4 stated that some of the older inmates provided guidance to offset inside offenses and helped in his mental development, steering him in the right direction. PII-1 highlighted behaviors from time in prison that affected the interview process and getting a job, stating, "your habits become what you do, you become your habits." PII-4 talked extensively about the hierarchy of power in the in-prison caste system on prison behavior that followed the PII into reentry

that determined the probability of recidivism. Although the PIIs spoke of the positive aspects of prison that helped in the prison experiences and prepared them for reentry into society, they remained unprepared for the realities of societal reentry, experiences of rejection, and challenges to acquiring employment.

### **Rejection and Rejection Avoidance in the Interview Process**

Rejection and rejection avoidance inundated the responses of the PIIs throughout the interviews. There was an expectation of rejection when declaring a felony, which the PIIs in this study perceived as a life sentence, even though the acknowledgment of PII hardships by authority figures provided validation for PII-1, PII-2, and PII-4 that helped them to maintain or increase self-esteem. The unfamiliar experiences and uncertainties that PIIs faced during societal reentry caused them to feel more comfortable around other PIIs. The PIIs referred to themselves as a “subgroup,” as occupying the “bottom of the rank of the ladder of society,” and as “alienated from true citizenship” due to having the brand of a felony. Employer rejections caused PIIs to turn to thoughts of entrepreneurial ventures and mentoring other PIIs in entrepreneurship and the skills to acquire employment. The preincarceration, incarceration, and postincarceration experiences and perceptions of the PIIs provided the responses necessary to answer the research question and identify four overarching themes.

### **The Four Key Themes From the Findings**

The previously mentioned summary of findings produced the following overarching themes: (a) inadequate transition programs leave PIIs unprepared for the interview process and mental challenges of rejection due to having a criminal record; (b)

employer rejection affects self-esteem and self-efficacy, leading to rejection avoidance, entrepreneurial mindset development, entrepreneurial ventures, and mentoring others in job acquisition skills and entrepreneurship; (c) preincarceration and incarceration experiences affect postincarceration experiences; and (d) prisonization affects social identity. The following section provides details on the findings and results of this study.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

#### **The Interview Process and the Challenges Faced by the Previously Incarcerated Individual**

A job interview is a process by which an employer considers eligible candidates for a job by bringing them in so that job interviewers or hiring managers can ask questions of them regarding educational attainment, employment history, and qualifications for the job (Derous et al., 2016). The process begins with the candidate filling out an application, submitting the application to the company, and awaiting a call for an initial interview (Tan et al., 2016). If a candidate completes an interview, the process might end with a job offer or a need for a subsequent interview in the narrowing of the candidate pool to determine the final candidate for hire (Tan et al., 2016). Many individuals find the interviewing process intimidating, feeling that it produces anxiety and a loss of self-efficacy (Aysina et al., 2016). Aysina et al. (2016) discussed the need for job candidates to acquire interviewing self-efficacy, which can help individuals who have been unemployed for a long period to approach an interview with the sense of confidence needed to impress a job interviewer. The interview process is a challenge for individuals in the quest for employment that requires a certain amount of confidence,

along with adequate skills to both do the job and complete the interview. Interviewing can present a particularly greater challenge for PIIs.

### ***The Challenges for PIIs in the Interview Process: Declaring a Felony***

When an individual with a criminal record has a job interview, the usual feelings of anxiety or loss of self-efficacy are enhanced due to having to declare a felony, which may lead to rejection (Griffith & Young, 2017). PIIs fall into the category of the long-term unemployed and thus must acquire interviewing self-efficacy or confidence in their ability to complete the interview process successfully (Aysina et al., 2016). Even though many jobs require an interview to determine a candidate's eligibility for a job, employers may automatically reject applicants who declare a felony on an application due to the fear of the PII reoffending, a need to maintain a certain company reputation, or company policies that reject the hiring of PIIs (Ethridge et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2014). Finding ways to assist PIIs in acquiring jobs or simply obtaining the opportunity for a job interview is a longstanding and current challenge.

### ***The Case for Banning the Box and Implications***

In order to allow PIIs the opportunity for a job interview, abandoning the requirement for PIIs to declare a felony on a job application is a seemingly plausible initiative. Griffith and Young (2017) discussed the need to ban the box on job applications in which applicants must disclose a felony conviction in order to afford PIIs a chance for an interview. The premise behind the initiative to ban the box is that if a PII has an opportunity for an interview, the humanizing effect of the in-person encounter may override the employer's objections to hiring a person with a felony (Griffith &

Young, 2017). However, in the previous experiences of the PIIs in this study, when they revealed a criminal record that included a felony, either during or after an interview or when the background check was returned, employers rejected them, regardless of whether they were qualified for the job or not. The PIIs in this study enrolled in transitional programs after release to assist with acquiring employment due to the need to find employment to satisfy probation requirements, care for themselves, and overcome the challenges of having a felony.

The experiences of the PIIs in this study invalidated the premise that banning the box from applications would provide anything other than an interview. According to the PIIs in this study, declaring a felony during an interview ensured rejection. PII-1 stated that in one instance, a hiring manager had considered him the best candidate for a job paying \$92 per hour until he revealed his past felony. Although consideration for the job as the best candidate validated this PII's self-worth, the rejection was another experience that validated the need to look for alternate income opportunities rather than continue to seek employment. The employer's denial of the job was not due to the PII being unqualified. The denial occurred due to his criminal background. Solinas-Saunders et al. (2015) discussed the hiring practices of employers that resolved to hiring less qualified individuals for jobs instead of hiring a qualified PII. Solinas-Saunders et al. also stated that due to the discriminatory hiring practices of some employers, minorities have a 50% less chance of getting hired. PII-2 had an employer use available clout to implore the human services department to create a job from the internship position that PII-2 occupied, only to deny the PII the job after a background check. In a pretransitional

program experience, PII-3 remained on a job for 89 days (1 day short of the probationary period) and lost the job on Day 90 due to background check results. PII-4 stated that the acquisition of employment lasted for 2 days, and on Day 3, the PII had to return his uniform due to a background check.

The denial of employment for many PIIs is not due to their qualifications. The denial comes after a background check. Many employers' guidelines disallow felons from obtaining employment (Ethridge et al., 2014; Petersen, 2016; Visher et al., 2018). Ironically, without a background check, many PIIs are seen as the best candidates for jobs, according to the experiences of the PIIs in this study. All of the PIIs spoke of questioning the sincerity of a hiring manager to consider a person with a felony while sitting in an interview with expectations of rejection. According to the PIIs' responses, an employer had to be receptive to hiring convicted felons before the application or job interview process. Regarding rejection after a background check, PII-1 stated, "It takes all the air out of you." PII-1 reiterated the need and objective to start a business, and PII-2 and PII-4 spoke of the same mindset as PII-1 due to the perceived inevitability of rejection by employers. The PIIs spoke of employer and societal rejection as factors that affected their mindset, noting that challenges to acquiring an interview and getting a job increased with the declaration of a felony to an extent that education attainment failed to offset.

### ***The Case for Education Attainment: Effects on Acquiring Employment for the PII***

The PIIs in this study had various education levels, which had no significant bearing on the challenges that they faced. Zandi (2016) claimed that many higher paying

jobs require a higher level of education that most PIIs lack, which provides the reasoning for PIIs having to settle for low-paying jobs. PII-1 had a bachelor's degree; even though he qualified for a job, he lacked the ability to acquire employment due to having a criminal record. PII-2 acquired a master's degree and received rejections that seemed bewildering to him. He stated, "I don't know what it is, is it the algorithms that they use when they are trying to do their screenings?" Other researchers have revealed that low-paying jobs are the fate of PIIs due to criminal backgrounds and low education levels which lock the PIIs into low paying jobs and the status of the working poor (Furman, 2015; Hong et al., 2014; Reed, 2015; Swensen et al., 2014). Reed (2015) discussed the effects of education on the recidivism rate and determined that allowing inmates access to educational advancement increases their feelings of confidence and hope for employment. However, Boduszek and Debowska (2017) talked about the mindset changes needed due to preincarceration attitudes and experiences, as well as the prison adaptations that affect postincarceration experiences.

The findings in this study do not support Zandi's (2016) findings, as variations in the education levels of the participants did not yield better job opportunities for PIIs with higher education levels and criminal backgrounds. The PIIs developed an increase in confidence due to self-teaching and education attainment. However, the hope for employment decreased with the expectations and notifications of employer rejections that Reed (2015) failed to consider in highlighting the benefits of education for a PII when seeking employment. The education levels of the PIIs provided minimal differences in experiences or perceptions of the interview process. In addition, challenges for the PIIs in

the interview process involved many factors, including preincarceration and incarceration experiences.

### **Preincarceration Experiences: The Societal Caste System and Its Effects on Previously Incarcerated Individuals**

The social caste system is a hierarchical system of classifying individuals into social groups (Graff, 2015; Rollins & Hilliard, 2017). Graff (2015) and Rollins and Hilliard (2017) discussed the racial caste system, highlighting the lower social status of African Americans and their experiences of racial injustice and systemic racism. Hong et al. (2014) posited that employers reject African American PIIIs at a higher rate due to a blanket assumption of negativity and heightened fear when an African American male is a felon, called *statistical discrimination*. Petersen (2016) discussed the structural discrimination that seems built into the societal governing system that limits opportunities for certain groups of individuals that helps to exacerbate the concept of a caste system or hierarchy of power.

PII-2 spoke of the perceived injustice of the court system, stating, “they didn’t want to hear anything during the appeals process.” PII-4 stated, “but with me having a first offense, they were intent on me going to jail.” Both PII-2 and PII-4 were young when they were incarcerated for a first offense with minimal access to resources. Graff (2015) and Rollins and Hilliard (2017) highlighted the disparities in sentencing for minorities from the late 1970s to the 1990s, when tough laws on drug users and sellers filled the prisons with members of minority groups. Love and Morris (2019) conducted a study that found that the justice system disproportionately sentenced African American

youths with judgments that omitted diversionary and alternatives programs to incarceration. Previous experiences of societal rejection through racial injustice, along with constant reminders of prison adaptation and conformity to prison life, created additional psychological challenges for African Americans PIIIs through rumination.

### **Prisonization and Its Effects on the Previously Incarcerated Individual**

*Prisonization* is the institutionalization of inmates into the prison system through adaptation to the prison culture (Patzelt et al., 2014). Barak-Glantz (1983) discussed assimilation into the prison culture and mentioned that older inmates help newcomers to assimilate into the prison culture to offset inside offenses and provide protective measures. Ngozwana (2017) talked about the inmate support groups and mentorships that develop in prison settings that have a positive influence on the PIIIs. PII-4 stated that some of the older inmates helped to temper his nonconformist attitude, thereby helping to offset inside offenses and provided an understanding of the expectations of prison life. Kreager et al. (2017) discussed older inmates who acted as big brothers or mentors in prison and helped to maintain discipline, describing them as influencers who taught younger inmates the codes to survive. The acceptance of the guidance from older inmates helped to assimilate younger men into the prison culture (Kreager, 2017).

PII-1 provided extensive details of prison behavior that included establishing a “prison identity,” and “habits,” and “internalizing the system” that effected the transition to the outside world. The habits or internalized prison behaviors worked counter to societal socialization and expected behavior that exacerbated the challenges faced by the PII (Patzelt et al., 2014; Shlosberg, 2018). PII-1 provided an example and stated, “when

you come out with that system, you are that system, and you got to try to find a job to align with that system. He's got to unlearn what he has been doing for 10 years." The previously mentioned statements and findings support the discussions in Barak-Glantz (1983) about prison adaptations, older inmate influence, internalized behaviors, and conformity to the codes of prison life. The adaptations to prison life produced habits that many inmates carry into reentry that causes the PII to struggle with the challenges of adjusting to society. Prison life effects prisoners cognitively and behaviorally due to limited freedom, which produces hypervigilance (i.e., distrust and suspicions), institutional dependence for basic needs, over control, alienation, social withdrawal, isolation, exploitive norms, and diminished self-worth and personal values that mirror the symptoms of PTSD (Bassett, 2016; Ethridge et al., 2014).

### ***The PIIs' Experiences With the In-Prison Caste System***

The PIIs in this study spoke of prison experiences and prison identities that followed the PII into the reentry process. PII-4 talked about the caste system among the inmates and talked about the "powerful" and the "powerless," and those identities that remained with the PII upon release that determined the outcome of reentry. As explained by PII-4, if the inmate was on the lower level of the caste system in prison, when released, the identity followed the inmate. If the inmate was an influencer or powerful, then the upper status in the caste system followed the inmate into reentry that fostered confidence and resources unavailable to the powerless on the lower end of the caste system. PII-4 stated, "The authorities know that they are coming back because on the inside they never got self-confidence." If the occurrences during the job interview caused

the PII to ruminate on previous experiences of rejection (e.g., from preincarceration or incarceration), then the expectation of rejection produced a need to safeguard the self from further psychological harm that assigned negative connotations to the impending event altering the cognitive processes. The PII's experiences with the in-prison caste system provided insight into the incarceration struggles and influencers that negatively or positively affect the PII. However, the psychological well-being of the PII is dependent on the perceived level of accomplishment and needs.

### ***The Basic and Unmet Needs of the PII That Produce Negative Effects***

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory provided a defining measure for the basic needs of an individual and the progression to self-actualization (Bassett, 2016). The basic needs theory consists of five basic needs (i.e., physiological, safety, belonging or love, esteem needs, and self-actualization) that an individual must acquire before reaching a place of acquired meaning and purpose in life (Bassett, 2016; Dong et al., 2018; Harris and Levenson, 2020). However, Bassett (2016) discussed the judicial system's definition for basic human needs for inmates and highlighted the judicial system's wording that called for the *adequate* basic needs of inmates, which left the definition open to the interpretation of the incarcerating facility (Bassett, 2016). In a study conducted by Dong et al. (2018), PII's ranked the need for viable employment among the top four needs for stability after release from prison. PII-4 stated that although they give the inmates "free cots and a hot, your basic needs still ain't met" was a profound statement of the unmet needs of inmates. PII-1, PII-2, and PII-4 talked about the lack of resources available to meet the needs of the PII returning into society. PII-2 and PII-4 spoke of preincarceration

lack of resources that caused the PII to turn to illegal means of acquiring income. Given the above responses of the PII in this study, and according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the PII never progressed beyond the initial level of attempting to acquire the basic needs to sustain the self and the PII's family's needs. PII-2 and PII-4 spoke of the unsafe streets. PII-1 highlighted the cruelty of the streets, while all the PII spoke of not belonging or feeling rejected or ostracized. This brings about a deep concern as to what path the PII must take to move through the levels of the hierarchy of needs and achieve self-actualization. If the PII remains ostracized from integrating back into society, then the only belonging or acceptance of the PII occurs within a subgroup of the main of society that includes all PII, only.

### ***Prison and Social Identity for the PII***

There are many subgroups within this society that include the homeless, military veterans, Catholics, Christians, mothers, fathers, and many others that hold a subgroup identity and an identity with the whole of society, also. Social identity allows a person to identify with a certain group of individuals as a member of that group (Boduszek & Debowska, 2017). However, when a group of people identify with a subgroup and feel excluded from the main group of society, the effects of rejection become heightened. Boduszek & Debowska (2017) discussed the social identity of deviant groups and stated that inmates acquired self-esteem by identifying with and acceptance into certain ingroups in prison. To identify with certain groups while in prison could serve as protection and safety, inclusion, belonging, and meaning in life, which is a step in acquiring the basis needs in the hierarchy of needs. However, when a person comes out

of prison into society and receives rejection instead of acceptance, the acquired hierarchical status diminishes, and as PII-1 stated, “You come home, and you become just another person in the street with no identity, and you don’t belong nowhere.” With the effects of prisonization on the social and interaction skills of the PIIs that affect the job interview process and self-efficacy, the data acquired adds to the body of knowledge for the theories of prisonization and self-efficacy.

### **The Theoretical Lenses: Prisonization and Self-Efficacy**

The finding of this study added to the body of knowledge regarding the theory of prisonization introduced by “Clemmer in 1958 and Sykes in 1958 followed by additions to the theory by Wheeler in 1961” (Barak-Glantz, 1983, p. 129). Shlosberg et al. (2018) discussed the theory of prisonization as the adverse effects that a lengthy prison sentence has on a PII that manifests as adaptations to the prison code and culture (Barak-Glantz, 1983). The PII-1 and PII-4 spoke of adaptations to prison life that worked counter to the reentry process that negatively affected the social and interaction skills necessary for a job interview or acceptable societal interaction. However, all of the PIIs spoke of having the knowledge to present in an interview irrespective of the effects of prisonization that gives credence to diminished effects of prisonization or the ability of a person with high levels of personal ability and inner confidence to counteract the effects of prisonization. Barak-Glantz (1983) discussed the levels and groups within the inmate system and the need to prepare for societal reentry upon sentence completion and to avoid reoffending while releasing many of the adaptations to the prison culture. When assessing the different inmate social groups and the preparation for reentry, the researchers did not

consider the depth of societal casting that occurred before incarceration that added to the prison social system experiences and the postincarceration experiences of rejection from the newfound labeling of the PII subgroup.

The findings from this study added to the body of knowledge for the theory of self-efficacy. The second theoretical lens in this study consisted of the self-efficacy theory presented by Bandura (1977). The self-efficacy theory has a basis in two concepts that consist of the individual perception that specific responses (e.g., soft skills) produce a given outcome, and a given outcome is due to confidence in the efforts of personal actions (e.g., practical skills; Bandura, 1977; Bartel, 2018). The skills taught in intervention programs create inner confidence that the taught behavior and skills will produce the desired outcome (Bandura, 1977). If a PII's confidence in personal ability for securing the job stems from attitude and cognitive behavior development, then the efficacy of expectation applies due to cognition and not a learned skill (Bandura, 1977). The PIIs of this study spoke of confidence in personal ability supporting the efficacy of expectation due to cognitive ability and not practical skills learned since the PIIs lacked the skills necessary to meet the qualifications for the interviewing employers. However, the theory does not account for the preincarceration experiences of a racial caste system (i.e., statistical, structural, or systemic discrimination) along with the in-prison caste system that may have influenced the perceptions of efficacy during the interviewing process and locating employment. In essence, prisonization and the preincarceration experiences affect the prison experience, social identity, and societal reentry that requires

adequate transitional programs to prepare the PII for reentry with realistic expectations and the skills needed to secure employment.

### **The Previously Incarcerated Individuals' Experiences and Perceptions of Transitional Program Effectiveness**

The value of adequate and effective transitional programs that incorporate cognitive restructuring in some form provided PII-3 with the needed tools for positive reentry and employment with the help of other factors. One of the factors that led to PII-3's success in acquiring employment was the statements of preincarceration social supports and work experience in blue-collar work. PII-1 had work experience, even though much of the experience was in white-collar jobs. PII-2 went to prison at an early age with no work experience other than illegal drug trafficking. Hesketh and Robinson (2019) provided an article highlighting the entrepreneurial mindset of gangs that sold drugs as deviant behavior and stated that the behavior was a means of financial gain from an illegal entrepreneurial venture. Even though PII-2's deviant behavior was illegal, the PII had an entrepreneurial mindset before incarceration. PII-3 stated, "I always kept a job." PII-4 had a minimal amount of work experience in the fast-food industry. PII-4 stated, "The only jobs that were available were fast food, the military, custodial work, teaching, or trades." Power and Nolan (2017) discussed the available jobs for ex-offenders and stated that many of the jobs for PIIs were low-paying, unsafe, or undesirable. PII-3 stated, "everyone that saw me taking the tour as I was leaving out said, you don't want to work here" regarding the consideration for a job in a factory. PII-1, PII-2, and PII-4 lacked the social network that PII-3 had that helped him upon release.

Amasa-Annang and Scutelnicu (2016) and Visher et al. (2017) discussed the inadequacies of transitional programs in evaluative studies and stated a need to provide mindset changes or cognitive restructuring before practical skills training and ensure that the PIIs maintain realistic expectations of the reentry process to offset and lessen the chances of recidivism. When the PII participates in adequate and effective transitional programs, the challenges of acquiring employment are less likely to diminish self-esteem or self-efficacy.

***Transitional Programs That Produce Self-Efficacy: Entrepreneurial Training***

Entrepreneurial training programs for PIIs provide increased self-efficacy, feelings of persistence, and the skills to look for opportunities in the market (Keena & Simmons, 2015; Patzelt et al., 2014). The skills training helped some PIIs to acquire employment or start a business through knowledge and skills like the 20-Week In-House Entrepreneurial Program (Keena & Simmons, 2015). Entrepreneurial ventures allow PIIs the additional income needed to subsidize employment income or start a small business as the sole income to avoid the challenges of finding and securing employment that probation and parole officials require (Patzelt et al., 2014). PIIs with an entrepreneurial mindset use rejection to fuel self-improvement by embracing the experiences without allowing the experience to deplete self-esteem or self-efficacy (Keena & Simmons, 2015). However, without the training necessary to combat the feelings from rejections, the PIIs self-efficacy decreases.

### ***The PIIs' Challenges and Need to Maintain Self-Efficacy***

The experiences of low self-efficacy when approaching an interview with insufficient job skills necessary to do the job for a successful interview presentation supports the need for adequate transitional programs (Bandura, 1977). All the PIIs spoke of low confidence levels regarding the skills necessary to do the jobs for which they applied. All the participants stated doubt about getting the job that stemmed from the anticipation of rejection due to the criminal record. However, all the PIIs in this study had interview knowledge and spoke of confidence in self-knowledge and self-abilities. The loss of self-efficacy in those inherent abilities came due to the uncertainty of those abilities to help the PII to overcome the challenge of having a felony, which is a factor beyond the basis for the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The PIIs used the idea of entrepreneurial ventures to soften the effects of the rejections with the knowledge of other workable and attainable options for income. Even though an entrepreneurial mindset provided the PIIs an avenue to acquire the necessary income to meet their needs, the psychological aspects of prisonization remained. To avoid further harm to the self, the PIIs looked to alternatives to enduring the rejections from interviewers by embracing thoughts of entrepreneurial ventures.

### **The Effects of Rejection on the Psychological Well-Being of the Previously Incarcerated Individual**

Rejection from employers and the perceived rejection from society seems a harsh and branding sentence for many PIIs. With the use of classification words, the PIIs spoke of group identity (i.e., “sub-group,” “bottom of the rank of the ladder of society,” and

“alienated from true citizenship”) among PIIIs that created a psychological mindset of negativity of the self. De Rubeis et al. (2017) developed a study that looked at the effects of rejection sensitivity in men. One of the results revealed that when one subjects another to rejection, the remembrance of the rejection-event by the other creates expectations of more rejection when the cues are similar to those from the previous experiences (Rubeis et al., 2017). Wessel (2018) provided an examination and synthesis of the adaptive and maladaptive error processing theories and discussed the error event that produced subsequent maladaptive behaviors through cognitive processing connecting the prior event to present occurrences, therefore, validating the previous reaction through rumination. In essence, the previous rejections in the lives of the PIIIs had a profound effect on the reactions to rejection throughout life without the assistance to rectify those cognitive processes by cognitive restructuring. For instance, PII-1 consistently highlighted the expectation of employer rejection and the need to offset that rejection by embracing an alternative to enduring the interview. Wessel (2018) discussed the corrections in cognitive processing that occurs due to error events that cause the person to look for alternatives in avoidance of recreating the previously perceived error event. PII-2 and PII-4 stated disdain for the expected interview rejection due to previous experiences that produced a generalized response or blanketed perception of the outcome of the interview and all subsequent interviews before completing the task. PII-3 restated the perceptions of a relative that had projected a negative outcome for the employment chances for the PII. However, PII-3’s cognitive processing overruled the negative interjection and proceeded to the interview with positivity due to previous experiences of

acceptance before incarceration that created a different cognitive response to another PII's perceived error event. The cognitive processing that couples previous occurrences of rejection with current perceptions and actual experiences of rejection produced the cognitive error in thinking that all interactions with perspective employers will conclude in rejection due to the declaration of a criminal record. The psychological well-being of the PII and the effects of employer and societal rejections created traumatic experiences for the PII that added to the preincarceration and incarceration experiences.

The experiences and perceptions of rejection for the PII's produced the equivalence of traumatic events that affected the PII's feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem. Bowler et al. (2018) discussed a PII's adverse psychological experiences that stem from preincarceration trauma or underprivileged circumstances, prison adaptation, and socially diminishing stigmas. Westcott (2015) discussed the trauma endured by PII's that stem from social injustice, marginalization, incarceration, and postincarceration experiences that negatively affect the PII. Harris and Levenson (2020) discussed the trauma endured by PII's convicted of sexual offenses that continue throughout life due to the registry requirements. The effects of rejection have the potential to cause, trigger or exacerbate trauma. The psychological well-being of the PII is a necessity due to the expectations by society of a transition that includes resilience, confidence, and growth.

The need to acquire positive self-esteem and self-efficacy seems necessary for a PII to approach the job interview with confidence in the self and skills necessary to do the job. Hong et al. (2014) provided a study to determine if self-esteem and self-efficacy correlated to employment hope and determined that high levels of self-esteem revealed

positive results for employment hope, even though self-efficacy showed no significant results. According to the responses, all the PIIs had a high level of self-esteem, self-worth, and self-motivation. All the PIIs spoke of praying, researching, and using self-motivating techniques to help in maintaining the awareness and preservation of the self. However, when factoring in the experience of rejection and the declaration of a felony, employment hope diminished for the PIIs in this study. Even though employment hope diminished, the hope of acquiring income from alternative ventures increased. The results from this study do not support the premise of increased employment hope, regardless of the presence of high self-esteem, when having to declare a felony and ruminations of employment rejection surfaces. Although the PIIs maintained feelings of high self-esteem and self-efficacy in inherent abilities, the PIIs agreed that they and others lacked basic needs for successful reentry. With the loss of identity, unmet needs, the effects of prisonization, and the lack of adequate transitional programs that include services for cognitive restructuring which provide the PII with realistic expectations for reentry, the justice system prevails in punishment, yet fails in rehabilitation and preparation for reentry.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The criteria for this study included: (a) PIIs between the ages of 23 and 39; (b) a minimum prison sentence of 5 years; (c) a release date of 12 months or less from the time of the study's inception; and (d) the completion of a transitional program after release. No validation of the criteria occurred. The vetting questions required a yes or no answer (i.e., self-reporting) at the discretion of the participant, which was a limitation due to the

study's dependence upon the participant's reporting. The small sample size was another limitation of this study that used the responses of four participants. Even though the participants provided thick, rich detail to all questions that provided adequate data to answer the research question and reach saturation, the small sample size limited the transferability of the study to other PIIIs. The generic qualitative design has limitations due to the unbound nature of the design that borrows from other designs and methods. However, by detailing the methods and approaches in this study to create rigor and transparency, the limitation of the design lessens creating credibility.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

The first recommendation pertinent to this study entails future studies to broaden the participant pool to include adult PIIIs of any age and allowing participants with release dates more than a year from the inception of the study. Studies show that older PIIIs that have lengthy prison sentences have a lower recidivism rate (Hong et al., 2014). Even though studies show that the effects of prisonization seem more apparent in the first 6 months from release, PIIIs with prison sentences of 20 or more-years might have increased internalization of the prison culture that require additional time to overcome (Ethridge et al., 2014; Lopez-Aguado, 2016; Schnittker, 2014; Shlosberg et al., 2018).

In a review of the literature, some of the studies provided recommendations for future studies that require consideration in the quest to add to the body of knowledge for PIIIs. A study by Ethridge et al. (2014) stated a need to provide additional studies on PIIIs reentering society with disabilities and co-occurring disorders and the evidence-based services available due to the additional needed resources to assist the PII in reaching a

sense of stability. The PIIs in this study discussed the lack of resources and support in the communities for successful reentry, and PII-1 highlighted the need for mental health services for the PII, especially the African American male, due to the injustices endured over the years. Miller and Miller (2017) stated a need to evaluate the transitional programs for the inclusion of services for PIIs with co-occurring diagnoses. Co-occurring disorders create additional challenges to securing employment that increases when the PII endures the stigma of having a felony and presents with co-occurring disorders that make socialization harder that would affect the interview process that requires societally acceptable socialization skills (Feist-Price et al., 2014). LePage et al. (2018) provided a study that determined that employers consider PIIs in the same manner, regardless of the sentence length. Recommendations included providing programs to help PIIs get to the interview and avoid the screening-out in the application phase before the PII could present for job interviews (LePage et al., 2018). Griffith and Young (2017) presented an article on the Ban the Box initiative to eliminate the question of a criminal history to allow a PII to get to the interview due to studies that showed an employer's willingness to hire that increased when the interviewer can interact and communicate with the PII face-to-face. Solinas-Saunders et al. (2015) posited that banning the use of the criminal background in determining employment eligibility might increase statistical discrimination by race or demographics as a substitute. Future studies might assess employers for the extent that a PIIs criminal history has on the considerations for employment due to an employer's willingness to hire PIIs, as stated in LePage et al.

(2018) and the need to understand what factors seem more prevalent in eliminating a PII during the application process.

Three of the PIIs voiced thoughts of entrepreneurial ventures as an alternative to seeking employment and continuing the subjection to rejection from job interviewers or employers. Harper-Anderson (2019) provided a study which looked at entrepreneurs in Chicago and found that many of the African American entrepreneurs began a small business due to racial inequality and injustices that hindered economic advancements. Future studies might look at additional factors that caused African Americans to start small businesses that might include the avoidance of rejection from employers after interviews or preincarceration entrepreneurial experience. Bowler (2018) looked at preincarceration experiences that influenced the mental health of inmates and stated a need to determine the depth of preincarceration experiences on the mental health of the inmate. Preincarceration experiences for the African American male PII might include the effects of the racial caste system discussed by Graff (2015) and Rollins and Hilliard (2017) which warrants further research to determine the correlation between preincarceration and incarceration caste system identities to social identity embraced upon release.

The inadequateness of many transitional programs creates the need for further research to determine the services that PIIs perceive as effective. PII-1 and PII-4 discussed the mental illnesses of inmates that do not get better while in prison and carry those issues back into society when released, even though PII-3 spoke of programs that helped to diminish substance abuse problems and instill skillsets for completing an

interview and getting a job. The apparent differences in program services across penal institutions are stark. However, the need exists to determine which programs provided the necessary training and mindset changes needed to meet the challenges of reentry without instilling unrealistic expectations by asking the PIIs to describe experiences of those programs on a broader scale to effect social change efforts on this topic.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Individuals that complete prison sentences become disconnected from family and lose homes, vehicles, jobs, and societal connections (Ethridge et al., 2014). Due to the expectations and requirements for conformity, inmates adapt to the prison culture, and then upon release, society has expectations of the PII to enter communities with a transformed mindset and the skills necessary to adapt (Martin, 2018; Patzelt et al., 2014; Shlosberg et al., 2018). Adaptation includes filling out job applications and enduring an interview for which many PIIs feel unprepared due to a loss of social skills and either nonparticipation or insufficient participation in reentry programs while incarcerated (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016). Amasa-Annang and Scutelnicu (2016) suggested a need to require mandatory reentry program participation to ensure that PIIs transition with the tools needed to succeed. The problem with mandating inmates to participate in any reentry program is that the mandate solidifies the constraints and conformity requirements that increase the depth of prisonization. Martin (2018) provided a study that revealed the levels and extent of prisonization for some PIIs and stated a need to lessen the restrictive programs upon reentry that extend judicial and penal authority and control. To address the needed social change in this area, Bowler et al. (2018) stated a need to

provide inmates with sufficient information on available programs for reentry for a more informed PII.

Each of the PIIs in this study talked of reading and researching while incarcerated, which gives credence to creating brochures and small booklets to explain the challenges to reentry and the available programs to assist. The effort would mirror the pamphlets and brochures found in doctors' waiting rooms or travel agencies that foster questions and interest in the information within. The PII Reentry Information Stations would provide a method of informing the PII and assisting the PII in making informed decisions for turning their mindset towards adapting to the outside world and not solidifying the inside culture or prisonization that mandatory participation would solidify.

The results of this study revealed a need to advocate for family education, especially for the family to which the PII will reside upon release. PII-3 stated that when he came home, his relative placed no requirements or pressure about getting a job. Rather, the relative stated a need for the PII to relax and take some time to adjust, which released the PII from the stress and push to immediately find employment. The PII found employment almost immediately without pressure. PII-4 stated the pressure and stress of looking for employment while living with relatives, and PII-2 talked about the lack of life skills needed to adapt to societal expectations. When PIIs come home, families and communities need access to information to help support and assist the PII. PII-1 stated that the family participated in casting doubt on the PII's transformation and persistently reminded the PII of the stigmatizing felony status. Communities need access to information to promote understanding and support for PIIs. LePage et al. (2018) stated a

need to educate communities on the stigmas and barriers that hinder a PII's reentry success, getting to the interview, and acquiring gaining employment. PII-2 provided a statement that summed up the need for advocacy by stating, "I don't want to be that person anymore, and I am not that person anymore. People need to start trying to understand everyone as people."

The results of this study have the potential to inform counselors of the additional needs of PIIs with co-occurring diagnoses and the susceptibility to renewed drug use or current drug addictions. Simourd et al. (2016) supported a rehabilitative mandate to provide therapeutic services to inmates for psychological well-being. The need for a psychiatric assessment for re-entering PIIs should be mandatory before release, and the PII should receive an immediate referral to sufficient resources to meet the PIIs needs for psychiatric, health, financial, housing, and transportation support. Bowler et al. (2018) interjected a need to determine the preincarceration experiences which may have exacerbated the incarcerated mental states that counselors should include in the assessments of the inmate and the PII.

The results of this study support the need and inclusion of entrepreneurial training to increase self-efficacy and self-esteem and provide resilience when rejected by society and interviewers in the job interviewing process. Amasa-Annang and Scutelnicu (2016) discussed the Second Chance Act that provides the guidelines and funding for reentry and transitional programs. The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) discussed in Visher et al. (2017) provided program guidance and funding for programs that benefit violent offenders. The legislature on the state and federal levels need to

consider evidence-based programs, as stated in Ethridge et al. (2014), for mandatory inclusion in all reentry and transitional programs for consistency among programs due to the inconsistent program offerings across cities and states. Keena and Simmons (2014) provided an evaluative study on the effectiveness of an entrepreneurial training program that had proven effects in providing inmates with confidence, resilience, boldness, and the knowledge to look for opportunities in the market. The need exists to advocate for program legislation on the state and federal levels that provide evidence-based services and the necessary skills to assist PIIIs in reentry.

### **Conclusion**

As stated previously, the history of the prison system goes back many centuries with a background far different from the prison systems of today (Buntman, 2019; Westcott, 2015). Buntman (2019) described the idea of imprisonment as a form of institutional repression that takes away the freedom of the individual to acquire total control over that person. The development of the New York prisons brought new challenges to maintaining any form of social behavior by requiring that all prisoners work, eat, and function in silence with strict adherence to rules of control to offset beatings for noncompliance (Barnes, 1921; Westcott, 2015). The New York model spread throughout the nation and the world as a model that taunted the benefits of total control and silence without regard for the trauma endure by the inmates or effects of solitude and nonsocial behavior on societal reentry that required socialization skills (Barnes, 1921; Westcott, 2015). Penal institutions incarcerated individuals and lacked correctional and rehabilitation efforts to prepare the incarcerated individual for transitioning into society

adequately (So, 2014). The effects of imprisonment cause adverse effects that linger into societal reentry.

Some of the effects of incarceration might include increased frustrations, prisonization, mental and physical health deterioration, and diminished social skills that affect postincarceration behavior (Shlosberg et al., 2018). Programs to increase the knowledge of the PII (e.g., education courses, cognitive restructuring, and job and life skills training) create the confidence necessary to approach a job interview with a sufficient amount of confidence in self-knowledge and skills for a successful interview and employment hope (Ethridge et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2014; So, 2014). Patzelt et al. (2014) discussed entrepreneurial training in transitional programs that teach a PII to look for opportunities in the market and capitalize on those opportunities to create small businesses. The entrepreneurial training included training in communication, socialization skills, persistence, and tenacity that produced the cognitive restructuring necessary to increase self-efficacy, diminish the effects of prisonization, and increase employment chances (Patzelt et al., 2014). Patzelt et al. (2014) found that PIIs exhibited more perseverance in finding jobs and confidence in abilities (e.g., self-efficacy) to obtain employment due to the training received, even though some researchers contradict the need for self-efficacy in acquiring employment.

Many businesses and factories use the interview process to determine whether an applicant fits the job description and requirements for employment in a particular establishment (Derous et al., 2016). Aysina et al. (2016) described the interview process as stressful that produces anxiety, especially for the long-term unemployed (i.e.,

unemployed for a year or more) that causes additional feelings of depression and low self-esteem. Most PIIs spend at least a year in prison that would qualify as the long-term unemployed. The need exists to assist the long-term unemployed to acquire confidence in interviewing skills (e.g., interviewing self-efficacy; Aysina et al., 2016). In addition, the PII requires assistance to decrease the effects of prisonization and increase socialization skills along with confidence and self-esteem.

According to the PIIs of this study, the adaptation to the prison culture produces habits that may or may not negatively affect societal reentry. Martin (2018) provided a study that highlighted the effects of prisonization for several PIIs that showed how PIIs maintain the habits from prison that included eating and sleeping habits, observances of hypervigilance, and anti-social behavior. For example, consider inmates in prison awakening at certain times, knowing what food will be served on different days and growing accustomed to that, always watchful to avoid harm, and conforming to the rules to avoid solitary confinement. The individual gets out of prison without adequate training or cognitive restructuring to alter the mindset and enters a new world where there are no more daily, hourly, or weekly instructions or requirements. The environment is new and different with many people that are unknown. The parole or probation officer tells the PII to find a job or violate probation or parole. The PII must locate employment, fill out an application, and hope for an interview. The interview comes, and the PII lacks the job skills necessary for the job and seems leery about approaching an unknown place and sitting and talking to an unknown person to share personal and private information with a person that they do not know and do not trust. That is the picture of prisonization and a

PII entering into society without the necessary transitional program training to provide acceptable social and life skills and interviewing etiquette to present in an interview to secure a job needed to prevent parole or probation violations. That is the problem. The solution lies in providing transitional programs in prison before release and additional transitional programs and resources after release to assist the PII in getting to a job interview, providing the appropriate clothing, conducting a needs assessment for additional personal needs, and assessing the PII for mental disorders and drug addictions or susceptibility to relapse before release. Once the assessments reveal the needs of the inmate, a tailored plan to fit the needs of the individual is imperative. If this plan sounds like social services, then that would be a correct assumption. The released PII should meet a caseworker upon release, first. The depth of social service that I suggest would take complete restructuring of the social services system and how legislators, community workers, and social service workers view the PII. However, if recidivism is to become a problem of the past, then the past needs to inform the present of the needs for the future, and the PII that returns to society is inclusive in that future, for as PII-2 stated, "We are citizens, too."

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## Appendix A: Research and Interview Questions

What are the experiences and perceptions of the job interview process for an adult PII who served a 5 or more-years prison sentence and participated in a transitional program?

The questions after program participation were as follows:

- What were the types of training and skills you received during the job training program that you attended?
- What kind of education programs did you take part in while in prison?
- What occurred in your life before going to prison that affected how you think or feel about job interviews or getting a job?
- What occurred during your time in prison that either prepared you for the job interview or made you feel unprepared for the job interview?
- What occurred during the job training program after release that affected how you think or feel about the job interview and getting a job?
- What are your feelings and thoughts about completing the job interview?
- What happened to you to produce those feelings or thoughts?

The follow-up questions for participants after the completion of a job interview were as follows:

- How did you feel about yourself before going to the job interview?
- What were your thoughts and feelings during the job interview?

- What changes, if any, occurred in what you think of the job interview after the interview occurred?
- What changes occurred in what you think of yourself after finishing the job interview?

For those participants that got the job after applying and the interview:

- How did you feel about yourself after you got the job?
- What did you do to prepare yourselves for the interview and getting the job?

Appendix B: Questions for Vetting the Participant in the Initial Call

1. Are you between the ages of 23 and 39?
2. Was your release date 12 months or less from today's date?
3. Were you previously incarcerated for 5 or more consecutive years?
4. Did you participate in and complete a transitional program after release from prison?