

11-26-2024

## Perceptions of Experiences of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals on Community Reentry Programs to Reduce Recidivism

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Kelly Sieger

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2024

Abstract

Perceptions of Experiences of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals on Community Reentry

Programs to Reduce Recidivism

by

Kelly Sieger

MPhil, Walden University, 2021

MS, Arizona State University, 2019

BA, Arizona State University, 2017

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

November 2024

## Abstract

This study was conducted to identify the perceptions of experiences of formerly incarcerated individuals who have been actively involved in community-based reentry programming (CBRP). Utilizing a qualitative interview approach with previously incarcerated persons, the study's focus was to identify the differences in literature, lived experiences, and the connection between CBRP and recidivism through the perceptions of formerly incarcerated persons who have completed CBRP. A key goal was to identify difficulties in the reentry process through the perception of lived experience and offer suggestions for improvements through the lens of actuarial justice. Using a qualitative, phenomenological approach, data was collected through individual interviews and analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring patterns and themes. Manual transcription was used to organize and code this qualitative data. Findings show how formerly incarcerated individuals view reentry programming and its role in CBRP and recidivism. The results from 11 participants indicated that both internal and external factors contribute to recidivism based on the perspectives of individuals who have been incarcerated before. Participants suggested that refining individual treatment plans, organizational development, and providing comprehensive services for an additional time frame, post-incarceration, could lead to the necessary changes for ensuring success on an individual basis. These results can help enact positive social change by evaluating policies, procedures, and interventions required for individuals participating in CBRP in California and nationwide.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to my mother, Lisa. A single woman who raised me through trial and triumph regularly referred to education as being an award nobody can ever take from me. My mother, whose unwavering support has led me through multiple degrees and pushed me to pursue a career for those who often are left voiceless. My mother has been a lantern in the dark, a hand in the fog, and a set of footsteps alongside me on the beach. To my mother, who has instilled the value of education, perseverance, justice, and kindness in me to pass on to others should our paths cross.

To my husband, Andrew, who, through the pandemic, has taught me more about myself than I care to know and pushed me to change the world as we know it. Andrew, who continues to support me through all trials and tribulations while maintaining a level head. Andrew, the father to our child and my confidant in love. To his unwavering love and support while uplifting me through this process while also supporting me and while we continued through IVF. To Andrew, my love, my friend, and my favorite cheerleader.

To Turtle, my daughter, before your first birthday and for many years after. With the namesake of your great-grandmother, may you always know the value you hold in all spaces. Let this work show you that you can do anything through everything. May it showcase the importance that education, challenges, and questions hold so positively in your life. Let this work be a beacon of empathy as you navigate the world, knowing that you never know what tribulations one may have in one's life. Continue as your name, be gracious, be kind- change the world.

To Paul and Elizabeth Troxel—may you always be proud to call me family. Dedicated to the life's work that you have put in, both into our local communities and the State of California. Through the love and support you have shown me through the years, through multiple states, jobs, and now a family of my own. I dedicate this act of service to you both as you have served this community your entire life in one way or another. Thank you for loving me as you love your own.

To Alexis and Aiden—as you have both grown into beautiful young adults, may you know that I have done this as much for me as for you. I hope you look through this one day and know that school is hard, change is hard, and life is hard, but you can do it. Know that just as I have been supported, I will help you. Know that you can change the world if you want to, and there is nothing you cannot question to improve it; there is always a way. I hope you read through this in college and think your big sister is a badass, but appreciate the balance. Life comes fast, and you need balance to have something. Balance partners, balance fun, balance school, balance work, but always maintain balance. If you fall, know that I am here to help you up, just as you both have for me, whether knowing it or not.

To Jex, for always calling me Doctor, even when I didn't think I could ever live up to it. For being the definition of a best friend and supporting me from across the country. For the friend, I didn't even know I needed in 2019 who has been there for me in every way. May you read this and know that you have helped me in many ways. Thank you for believing in me as a hypothetical doctor from birthright to best friend and a literal doctor now. Thank you.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to my grandmother, “Toni,” my GG, Millie, women who could not have a credit card until halfway through their life, let alone write a doctoral dissertation. Who entered the world before wars and lived through them. The women who worked hard and smiled through. This is for you. Thank you to the people of color who came before me; you paved the way for me to sit at tables my ancestors could not imagine. To the children and people of color who come after me, never stop fighting for justice; never stop fighting for your right to learn, educate, and change the world around you. See something, say something; just because it has been doesn’t mean it must be.

Thank you.



## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my Chair, Dr. Kimberly Blackmon, whose guidance, encouragement, and patience were instrumental in this work. Without your support, I would have left this program and work long ago. I am forever grateful for the feedback, guidance, and care you give your students. I now fully understand how deeply engrained you will be in my work and life from this point forward, and I would have it no other way.

I would also like to thank my committee chair, Dr. David DiBari, who came to me with complete luck for your valuable suggestions- and seemingly effortless guidance in APA 7 formatting.

Thanks to my leadership teams, who have allowed me the flexibility to complete this work. Special thanks to Henry Capers for your late-night assistance and mental health check-ins as we attempted to navigate this process together in any capacity.

A special thanks to all of those who participated in this research. Your honesty, sincerity, and openness allowed me to tell your stories, hopefully improving the world of reentry and, therefore, the lives of millions.

On a personal note, I want to express my gratitude to many of my former teachers, professors, and counselors. Without them seeing what I could not see in myself, I wouldn't have kept pushing through each chapter of life. Your words matter; thank you. To my friends and family, who've asked me about this dissertation time and time again, I thank you for your harping; it reminds me it was waiting for me.

Lastly, thank you to those who believed in me and my work, believed humans

deserve love and are working in empathy. Your support means the world to me, and I could not have completed this without you.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

With more than 115 county-level detention centers, including court, temporary, and long-term holding facilities, California has over 148 state and local correctional institutions (Lofstrom & Martin, 2024). Due to this increase over the last 40 years, the number of offenders is outgrowing post-release in available facilities (Hayes et al., 2019). The overcrowding of correctional facilities is pushing more individuals out of incarceration and into community-based reentry programming (CBRP). For this research, criminal justice monitoring programs like parole and probation will not be included in CBRP (Kaeble & Alper, 2020; Lattimore et al., 2012; Payne & Brown, 2021). Outside of probation and parole programs, services related to “employment, housing, education, substance use and abuse, mental health, life skills, and criminality” will be CBRP that are serving those looking to successfully reintegrate back into the community after incarceration (Payne & Brown, 2021, p. 4; U.S. Department of Justice, 2019, para. 1). Although California has been able to create space using satellite programming and grants, the issue of occupancy space remains a pertinent concern. Often, CBRPs are forced to make decisions on the individuals that they are choosing to house due to their criminogenic history and rating, sometimes making housing and reentry programming opportunities scarce for those who are registrants or have high criminogenic scores.

Further, in a 2019 report published by the Auditor of the State of California, it was found that multiple poor practices led by the administrative team have led to a hindrance in state comprehensive recidivism reduction goals (Howle, 2019). This 2019 finding for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) shows a

disconnect between the goals of reentry programs and the programmatic reality for institutional reentry programs and CBRPs. If needs are met at the points where those participating need the most assistance, there will not be a successful reentry program, leading to recidivism.

With formal rehabilitation-only being added to the California Department of Corrections title in 2005, it could be argued that there is a deficiency of research and literature for successful rehabilitation programming for California-specific releasees. A review of the state correctional institutions revealed no documented residential programming. In traditional residential programming, formerly incarcerated individuals attend a classroom-like setting to receive groups specific to their reentry needs (i.e., family reunification, financial literacy, anger management, domestic violence, etc.), as well as on-one counseling or case management sessions (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2021). Although there are many reentry services within correctional institutions and through CBRPs, data suggest a lack of success even with the varieties of programming, staff, and funding (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2021). This lack of success has resulted in a gap in knowledge concerning whether releasees need to reintegrate into the community entirely versus what academia believes those in programming need to reintegrate safely into the community. If the needs of those released are not being met through rehabilitation programming, this could be due to a variety of reasons, including inappropriate programming for their criminogenic needs, lack of knowledge or understanding of the needs of releasees, lack of serious programming in CBRP's. All of these can lead to recidivism, homelessness, and an



increase in releases in the hospital systems, psychiatric systems, and justice systems.

This chapter identifies the background of the study, problem statement, purpose, research questions, theoretical foundation, nature, and definitions. Chapter 1 also includes assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations. These elements will assist in the fundamental understanding of this research.

### **Background**

Incarceration has been part of U.S. history since the colonial era. Although the history of incarceration has remained and cannot be changed, the frameworks behind it have regularly been the subject of discussion. Before the American Civil War (1861-1865), the U.S. justice system was based on a public gauntlet of shame and corporal punishment. However, post-war conversations and educational growth throughout the country radically turned the penal reformation of justice. After the creation of the Federal Prison System in 1891, it was not until 1932 that the first U.S. prison opened in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2021). In almost 50 years, the United States had undergone various legal changes, vastly changing what the 1932 legal system looked like compared to the 1891 legal system.

Years later, the 1959 “medical model” was created and popularized, driven by the idea that currently incarcerated individuals should be treated like psychiatric patients and were currently getting “cured” of their criminal activity (Stinchcomb & Hoppensteel, 200, p. 168). Nevertheless, after more than a decade of criminal justice operations with this model, it became clear that change was again needed. Using psychiatric doctrine to correct criminal behavior did not work, and thus, a new model was created. This change

resulted in what is now known as the “balanced model,” which quickly gained popularity in the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The model was based on understanding criminal acts related to the community and the victim (Bilchik, 1998). Both the federal and state criminal justice systems changed direction with the eventual goal of focusing on deterrence, incapacitation, resistance, and rehabilitation (National Institute of Justice, 2021)

Regardless, much has changed since 1971, especially with the popularization of the balanced model. Between the more than five BOP directors, regular state and federal criminal justice reform, and legislation changes, California, which aligns closely with federal mandates, has found itself with one of the highest levels of incarcerated persons in the United States over the last two decades, with 581 per 100,000 people being incarcerated as of June 2018 (Widra & Herring, 2021). Further, California has had a recidivism rate of greater than 65% (Bird et al., 2019). Several reasons have led to this rate, including but not limited to the passing of Assembly Bills, new laws related to the incarceration of individuals, and probation and parole changes. In 2011, Assembly Bill 109 (AB109) in the California legislature was marketed by many to remove long-term offenders from incarceration. Although many individuals were removed from state prisons, the AB 109 bill created longer incarceration sentences by removing them from prisons but reincarcerating them in jails when they could not maintain parole or probation guidelines, such as job placement or housing (Sacramento et al., 2020). As the CDCR advocates for the movement and closure of prison facilities across the state, offenders are pushed into county jails or released early. Overcrowding and jail-stay-prison-sentences

are being normalized, with a considerable recidivation rate of well above 60% of the released population reoffending within 5–7 years after the release (Bird et al., 2019; Howle, 2019; Statista et al., 2020). As California leadership has been at a criminal justice standstill since 2015 due to incomplete programming needs and funding, the lack of awareness, education, and literature around CBRPs related to reentry programming and rehabilitation for formerly incarcerated persons has also been at a standstill. Updated documentation, reporting, and change are necessary to promote recidivation reform for the Department of Corrections in California and at a federal level.

The present research will assist criminal justice professionals in understanding the perceptions and needs of those previously incarcerated. Although there have been many motions and changes to mitigate recidivism for Californians, the issue remains. Even the policies, legal changes, and literature around CBRPs are limited to academic perspectives with limited knowledge of the perceptions of those directly affected by the changes. This research will assist in closing the gap that exists in the literature and ensure a better understanding of lived experiences through understanding the perceptions of those who have successfully reintegrated into the community from CBRPs.

### **Problem Statement**

Based on my review, the gap between the literature and lived experiences represents a disconnect in understanding the successes and difficulties for participants of CBRP to graduate with successful completion. There are multiple challenges an individual may face when attempting to reintegrate back into the community after time in a CBRP. In theory, CBRP mitigates the issues of those reintegrating into the community

(Schlimpert, 2023). It is expected that those being released will create a plan with their social circle, parole or probation officer, or community team upon preparation for leaving incarceration. Although some may have plans, many do not, nor do they know community resources to create such plans. With anywhere from \$20-50 million given over a 5-year contract across California, limited funds are available to continue recourses for those who need assistance after they have been released from CBRPs. Difficulties that continue even when released from incarceration include being in mandated community-based programming, a lack of familial relationships, disservice or disconnections from community groups, including social services, and other state and federal policies (Visher & Travis, 2003). The disconnect between what is perceived to be needed by those who are currently released from incarceration and in CBRP versus what may be required is an ongoing gap in both current community programs as well as policy and legislation in the criminal justice system.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This research explored the experiences of releasees and what they believe they require to actively and stably reintegrate into the community after release from incarceration, only after they have completed reentry programming. A phenomenological approach was used to understand a releasee's understanding of where CBRPs could improve to support their needs as formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrating back into the community after being incarcerated. Although CBRPs generally assist in community transition, it is important to establish a connection between post-release requirements and what is needed from the perspective of those going through the process.

The disconnect between programming participants and the expectations from monitoring systems (e.g., parole, probation) represents a knowledge gap.

This study showcased the perceptions, feelings, and experiences of those released from prison who have gone through a CBRP. Although these individuals are no longer on monitoring and have completed their programming, understanding what needs were not met while they were in programming allows researchers to understand better the needs of those being released later. This research will enable individuals who may have previously recidivated or been incarcerated during times of global change to share their stories—giving researchers, legislators, criminal justice professionals, and more a better understanding of how they were able to navigate the treacherous community reintegration waters with a background of incarceration and what adjustments need to be made to ensure more successful outcomes.

### **Research Questions**

Considering the contextual background of the study outlined above, the following guiding research questions were advanced:

1. What are the perceptions of formerly incarcerated individuals who have gone through and completed reentry programming?
2. What are formerly incarcerated individuals' perceptions of the connection between CBRP and recidivism into the criminal justice system?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Actuarial justice, from labeling theory, created by Émile Durkheim (1897), argues that criminal acts are less of a legal issue and more of a societal outrage. For example,

during the California riots of 2020, there was a penal code violation but instead that there was public outcry and outrage that these things were happening in people's backyards. The more nuanced actuarial justice provides a metaphorical equation in which criminogenic risk and reward are calculated now applies.

Created and perpetuated by Feeley and Simon (1992), actuarial justice was adopted and developed over the last two decades into the theoretical framework researchers are now familiar with—actuarial justice theory. Within this theory, four characteristics, all related to the characteristics of the labeling theory, play into the rehabilitation models researchers find in reentry programs. The first is that deviance is expected, which positions deviant activities as a part of the social construct that makes a society (Bosworth, 2021; Robert, 2010). The second refers to risk-based profiles rather than the individuals, in which the formerly incarcerated “individual(s) identity is fragmented ... with different categories and level of risk,” thus identifying the individual as an institutionalized category instead of a person (Robert, 2010, p. 1, para. 4). The system will follow them through their release from incarceration to community monitoring, such as probation or parole, where formerly incarcerated persons are continually monitored and categorized by their incarceration number.

Third, actuarial justice is best characterized as managing the individuals rather than transforming (Bosworth, 2021; Robert, 2010). In this category, individuals are classified, categorized, and organized in terms of a risk profile, which is attached to their name and correctional number upon incarceration and follows them throughout their criminal justice experience (Bosworth, 2021; Robert, 2010). This characterization also

often determines the success rate for those who are allowed or able to go through programming, as well as what their programming may look like throughout the duration. Due to this, following their low, medium, and high-risk classifications, “paths are provided for different categories” or the individual is reported as somebody who is too high of a risk (Bosworth, 2021, p. 11). Finally, there is a focus on the characteristic of future behaviors rather than the past, where actuarial justice has a “prospective look” in “estimating and preventing the occurrence” of other criminal activity post-release (Robert, 2010, p. 12). These actuaries are taken into consideration in a variety of ways: (a) case management participation, (b) job placement, (c) mental health needs, (d) housing or lack thereof, and (e) compliance.

It is important to note that there are concerns regarding using such instruments within the process of actuarial justice and risk assessment instruments. The use of these allows a collective dehumanization among criminal justice professionals, “deny[ing] or belittling the full richness and uniqueness of that person’s humanity” (O’Hear, 2020, p. 195). The objectification of a mechanically curated numerical value given to the offender “may not provide a meaningful vice opportunity” for those looking to share their experiences leading to the offense (O’Hear, 2020, p. 196).

### **Nature of Study**

This study examined the perspectives of formerly incarcerated individuals and their experiences within reentry CBRPs in California. Using interview questions in qualitative research, I worked with previously incarcerated participants who have completed CBRPs to identify the perspectives of those who have gone through and

successfully completed CBRP in California following incarceration. The purpose was to understand better the perceived needs of those incarcerated and who have completed reentry, compared to academic and previously researched annotations. This study was conducted with the intent of arriving at an emergent theory that describes the role of formerly incarcerated persons' perspectives and experiences within programming and their actual perceived success after full release from the criminal justice system. Through individual interviews with eleven participants, I manually coded the transcripts to identify the theme among them.

### **Definitions**

*California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR):* California's institutional corrections title.

*Community-based reentry programs (CBRP):* A program that belongs to the community serves both geographically and philosophically, specifically for those who have been released from incarceration and are reintegrating into the community (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2022).

*Criminal history record information (CHRI):* A record includes personal identification and assessment data (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021).

*Life without parole (LWOP):* A term given to long-term offenders, specifically Life Without the Possibility of Parole offenders.

*Recidivism:* Criminal activity within three years results in rearrest, reconviction, or return to prison or jail with or without a new or altered sentence (National Institute of Justice, 2021).



### **Assumptions**

Some of the significant assumptions focused on during this research include assumptions about any previously incarcerated persons. With the difficulties experienced by this population, this research needed to cover the generality of assumptions for all ages, genders, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses. The population that was interviewed was currently off any correctional monitoring; it is to be noted that all individuals have spent time in prison, regardless of the crime committed. However, some individuals interviewed, or subpopulation references (i.e., offenders with sex crimes, crimes against children, or domestic violence charges) may have different or more targeted assumptions about them individually. Some of the assumptions for this general population included, but were not limited to:

1. This population is unwilling to share their previous experiences, including their last programming and youth experiences before and after incarceration.
2. This population is unreachable or difficult to reach due to their lack of technological literacy.
3. This population is scared to speak to researchers due to their previous interactions with authority figures.

Although these assumptions may stand true for some, they remained duly false for this research. Although it may have had difficulty due to technological literacy, this population was tech-savvy, open to sharing their previous experiences and life events, and showed no fear or disdain for speaking with me.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study aimed to understand the perceptions of formerly incarcerated persons who have completed CBRP's and reintegrated into the community. The research involved a qualitative study and analysis of interviews, identifying specific perceptions of phenomenological experiences such as being incarcerated, being released from incarceration and participating in CBRPs, and successful release from programming and criminal justice monitoring. This study also assessed the potential implications of CBRPs based on perceptions of those who have successfully completed said programming, including job placement, housing expectations, regulations around their previous criminal charge, and case management services.

Delimitations are conditions or parameters I set by intentionally create a limited scope of the study (Bloomberg & Vlope, 2018). For this dissertation, there were multiple delimitations. First, the study focused solely on those previously incarcerated, who had completed CBRP, have successfully graduated, and are no longer on criminal justice monitoring. The study only considered the impact of perceptions of those who have successfully completed CBRPs and are no longer on criminal justice monitoring. This study only focused on those who have successfully completed CBRP in California, analyzing self-reported data from interviewees. This study only considered participants who were placed into CBRP as a part of their plan of release from incarceration.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are the potential inherent weaknesses in the scope and the study (Bloomberg & Vlope, 2018). However, it is essential to note that limitations are external

conditions. This dissertation had multiple limitations, such as my ability to assess formerly incarcerated individuals willing to share their experiences due to the complexity of an individual's criminogenic history or willingness to share.

Another limitation is the complexity of human behavior regarding formerly incarcerated individuals who have successfully participated in and completed reentry programming. Coupled with the severity of their criminal activity, possible addiction, and more, formerly incarcerated participants may end up incarcerated again due to the previous severity of their criminal record. California is a state that abides by the "three strikes law," noting that even if a person is off probation or parole and commits a crime again, similar to the previous two, they are given harsher sentences. Therefore, the participant's ability to maintain the freedom to meet with the interviewer may have been thwarted due to extenuating circumstances revolving around their criminogenic history.

Next is the limitation of the possible participant's sensitivity to the process. This may have included their undesired nature of sharing their previous criminal history or experiences due to the previous mental health toll or general lack of desire to share openly. However, this may also relate to my sensitivity to the process, which took the form of taking more time and being more patient with one participant over another. For example, when one participant was open and willing to share, with full knowledge of the questions, that interview process may take only an hour. In contrast, the interview took significantly longer when somebody required time for reflection and silence between questions. Identifying my sensitivity and the participant's sensitivity was critical to understanding the interview and its process most effectively.

Following this, it was necessary to ensure that the only participants who would take part were those who had been charged and convicted of a crime, were no longer on probation or parole, nor any other criminal justice monitoring, had completed reentry programming, and were not currently charged with any new crimes. This allowed a seamless process for both myself and the participant. They spoke about their experience without fear of repercussions from criminal justice professionals overseeing their current programming. Finally, the research was only conducted in California. Although individuals may have been incarcerated in various counties, the regulations for CBRPs focusing on reentry programming are state-specific.

### **Significance of the Study**

Extant literature focusing on direct qualitative experiences from formerly incarcerated adults in California who have successfully participated in reentry programming is extremely limited. The significance of this study rests in its focus on addressing this issue. The study reviewed assessments and other forms of literature directly related to the personal experiences of successful programs completed by formerly incarcerated and monitored persons, the programmatic nature of reentry and rehabilitation programming, and the direct experiences of formerly incarcerated individuals who have completed the program, which will give a better understanding.

There is minimal information about individuals no longer on criminal justice monitoring and their experiences through reentry programming in California. However, the perceptions of those who have completed programming and are no longer on criminal justice monitoring, community members, politicians, and stakeholders will be able to

assess programs in the future based on the actual needs and perceptions of those who have successfully completed programming, instead of in academia alone. This study illuminated issues not often discussed with change in mind, awareness of the high recidivism rate, and overpopulation in institutions, causing additional stressors on an already overloaded justice system (Caporizzo, 2011). The awareness and needs of both currently incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrating into the community can garner more funding, thus leading to enhanced treatment and, eventually, reduced recidivism. Understanding the experiences of formerly incarcerated individuals who are no longer on criminal justice monitoring provides a platform to create a better foundation for evidence-based programming, allowing CBRPs to develop improved, more reentry-directed programming focused on the actual needs of the participants in programming rather than merely perceived needs.

### **Summary**

As one of the most densely populated states in the United States, California has been characterized as a liberal area in comparison to the nation, loosely identifying that there may be more opportunities for those previously and currently incarcerated throughout the state. Nevertheless, the rate of recidivism would suggest otherwise. Though many assumptions, limitations, and delimitations may have affected the interview and participant collection process, this research is still necessary. With the inadequate literature regarding previously incarcerated persons who have gone through reentry programming and are no longer on criminal justice monitoring, the gap needs voices and references for more research to be conducted. These academic and justice-

involved voices will be reviewed throughout the literature review I conducted, identifying the gap to be closed or made smaller through this research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the documented literature on individuals who have been released from incarceration and have successfully completed reentry programming to the full extent that literature could be located. A brief overview of the needs of those who are justice-involved has been provided, including the possible characteristics of those previously incarcerated in a limited form. This limitation showed the gap in literary needs for those who have been released and completed programming rather than how those individuals may be characterized on an academic level. This study aimed to locate the actual perceptions and needs of those who have gone through these programs and are no longer on criminal justice monitoring. If an excessive amount of characterization factors about this specific population had been provided, it would have detracted from the personal experiences and actual characteristics of those who will be interviewed later.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Scholarly literature within the criminal justice sector that focuses specifically on those who are formerly incarcerated and have completed reentry programming in California is essentially nonexistent. In California, the CDCR remains reluctant to share current and updated information on people who are currently under monitoring and need help keeping track of individuals who are no longer under any form of monitoring. After an individual is released, they may be placed on criminal justice monitoring, where probation or parole will check on them. During this time, it can be assumed that many being monitored may not be willing or able to share their experiences for fear of repercussions from their agent of record. Nevertheless, once an individual is released and

no longer on monitoring, they are free citizens. They are no longer required to interact with criminal justice professionals, often making it more challenging to connect, obtain information, or speak with them when they have reintegrated into the community.

Therefore, this makes it increasingly difficult to communicate with individuals about their previous experiences, which has resulted in the sparsity of this specific literature.

Literature for this research topic was first identified through independent audit researchers and state entities. Since much of the federal information comes from locally identified agencies such as jails and state prisons, it was necessary to note how the CDCR information differed from that of the Department of Justice as the population reviewed in California justice-involved individuals. The literature followed that the statistical evidence was collected regarding appointees, policies, law and regulation changes, and population development. Understanding the variabilities of services available to those incarcerated and released into programming is essential to growing awareness of the long-term development and growth an individual can make after incarceration.

Throughout the initial literature collection review process, it was revealed that many services, unless deemed lifesaving or essential, were paused or drastically changed to accommodate a virtual platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The severity of the pandemic led to all crucial public and private services being paused or changed to virtual platforms to decrease the chance of individuals contracting the COVID-19 virus.

Although the pandemic led to an increased gap in the data provided by the state to the U.S. Department of Justice and other state entities, the literature gap regarding formerly incarcerated individuals no longer on justice monitoring with successful completion of a



reentry program in California still needed to be included. To mitigate this gap in a limited capacity, I garnered first-hand literature from state entities, authors, co-authors, and auditors of state data to bring forth the best and most recent information instead of any timeline gaps that may have resulted.

After reviewing literature from state-led agencies, the focus shifted to federal platforms, such as the Department of Justice, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, the U.S. BOP, and the Office for Access to Justice. Although much of the information is similar, different laws provide a deeper and more nuanced understanding of reentry services and the perceived experiences and perceptions of those formerly incarcerated and who have completed reentry programming.

Obtaining information regarding formerly incarcerated and successful completion of reentry programming experiences is difficult. Many who have spent years incarcerated and are no longer being monitored do not wish to relive their painful pasts, including the necessities of their parole or probation monitoring, but instead move on. Identifying the differences between previous and recent research is challenging on both state and federal levels due to the lack of collected information on formerly incarcerated people who have completed reentry programming. It was found throughout the literature review that numerous longitudinal studies have been completed where the participants were released in the early 2000s and followed over a decade, only to have their data shared as recently as 2014. Nevertheless, these individuals may still be under criminal justice monitoring of some sort, and therefore, I noted limitations of the literature review. For this reason, the perspectives of formerly incarcerated individuals who have successfully gone through

reentry programming and are no longer on criminal justice monitoring have been considered.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Created out of labeling theory, actuarial justice theory explains the framework that most, if not all, rehabilitation and reentry models are created as many reentry programs are based on a numerical assessment system. The purpose of actuarial justice insinuates that a subjective risk factor is created and identified by the assessors, who believe that their assessment of an individual will yield correct, futuristic results (McAlinden, 2022). Taken and expanded from Durkheim's (1987) labeling theory, Feeley and Simon (1992) identify proponents of actuarial justice theory and purport four unique characteristics, all identifying metaphorical equations in which risk and reward are calculated. All of these unique factors fail to take in somebody's readiness to change prior to release from incarceration or during incarceration, which is an important aspect to measure for those looking to reenter back into the community (Alward et al., 2010). Bosworth (2021) and Robert (2010) identified the four characteristics as normalized deviance, profiling individuals rather than recognizing them as individuals, managing incarcerated persons, and future criminal predictions. This approach attempts to predict the future outcomes of criminal justice systems directly related to equations in a standardized test or assessment, either correctly or incorrectly. Within these equations, deviant activities are profiled, and individuality is fragmented by classifying an individual based on risk assessments. This creates a gap in the literature between theory and successful programming for Californian justice-involved individuals.

Actuarial justice argues that individuals are profiled, assisted, rehabilitated, and placed in programming based on the risk level given by assessments such as the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI; Andrews et al., 2004). In theory, actuarial justice identifies high and low-risk offenders by reviewing the questions in a standardized assessment (Bonta, 1999). By profiling the individual and placing a standardized testing number on their record, there is minimal opportunity for discussion regarding the variables that may have led to their incarceration. In turn, these ratings allow criminal justice subsidiaries such as CBRP to quickly identify through dehumanization and numeric reduction those who are deemed an immediate risk to the public after their release and those who are not. Those considered high risk when they recidivate are typically given longer sentences, harsher punishments, and fewer opportunities for long-term community-based rehabilitation. In contrast, those with lower numbers are given the opposite: more opportunities for repair, community resources, opportunities through sentencing, and often even the ability to participate in a specialty court (Bonta, 1999).

Though assessments like the LS/CMI may be used to validate the perceptions of correctional staff, this validity may only sometimes consider extenuating circumstances or outlying factors such as race, socioeconomic status, access to healthcare education, and other public resources. In theory, this assessment will assist in the formation of “cognitive-affective, behavioral and social risk factors that incite, facilitate, promote and precipitate” criminal offenses (Lussier & Frechette, 2022, p. 1). However, the moral gray line that actuarial justice imparts to the criminal justice system indicates a sense of certainty and legitimacy tied to a number (Hannah-Moffat, 2012).

Formerly incarcerated individuals assessed as low risk and high reward (i.e., those who are no longer looking at the possibility of recidivism or have a meager chance of it) are often found in rehabilitative programs such as those discussed in this paper. It should be noted that the LS/CMI does not consider the factors mentioned earlier when sorting but instead uses actuarial justice to group incarcerated persons and those needing reentry programming based on 43 self-identifying questions designed to ascertain prior criminal behavior, antisocial behavior, education, or employment, and family status. This assessment also uses 81 staff-identifying questions regarding previous criminal behavior, social behavior, criminogenic potential, institutional factors, barriers to release, incarceration history, and responsivity considerations. Nevertheless, future reviews made by those operating the criminal justice system based on a particular numeric score of incarcerated individuals are given on behalf of those currently incarcerated at the discretion or compulsion of the truthfulness of self-actualized participants of the assessments. This way, if the incarcerated person believes that they are not antisocial, they will not identify as such, giving them a lower, better score than their counterpart who thinks they are antisocial. Likewise, if the incarcerated person does not self-identify their companions as “criminal,” they will score lower than their counterparts (Andrews et al., 2004; Baidawi et al., 2016; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004; Orsini et al., 2016).

Bosworth’s (2021) identification of the four characteristics of actuarial justice-based assessments helps break down assessments such as the LS/CMI to understand better the differences between staff scores and self-reported scoring. These assessments do not consider men and women; therefore, they are often a principal concern for

standardized risk factors (Giguère et al., 2021). Outside of the apparent differences between men and women in the criminal justice system come the differences between white and black incarcerated individuals (Harcourt, 2007). Because of this, Harcourt (2007) argues that actuarial assessment and rehabilitation programming methods may change the defining elements for parole and probation, reentry programming, audits, and other post-release agencies. For example, Black and brown incarcerated persons must take assessments like the LS/CMI or the newer, federally funded counterpart, the Prisoner Assessment Tool Targeting Estimated Risk and Need (PATTERN), or the partner to the LS/CMI, the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R). These assessments claim no racial bias; however, actuarial justice theory suggests otherwise.

Actuarial justice theory identifies factors specific to different racial groups that are not considered through equational risk and reward assessments. For example, an individual's socioeconomic status, education, and previous social circles are all added to the final assessment score. As Black and brown people are most often the individuals with lower socioeconomic stability, leaving formal educational facilities early, and may be more likely to grow up in an area of crime, they are already disadvantaged in the scoring process. Nevertheless, actuarial justice argues that minorities within the criminal justice community are disadvantaged by the equations put into place through standardized assessments. Overall, how minorities are addressed in the criminal justice system has resulted in assessments tailored to White, educated, and positively connected incarcerated individuals. Bonta (1999) refers to static factors as historical factors. Specifically, these factors, such as age or first offense, cannot be changed. While

dynamic factors are changeable, factors that fluctuate no matter age, offense, or other static factors, including employment and substance use.

### **Literature Review**

Given the current lack of literature on this study's specifics, showcasing the factors often attributed and identified within the actuarial justice assessment aspects of the criminal justice system and demographics for those involved is essential. Throughout this chapter, the literature review provides a concise yet sampled understanding of the CBRPs in California and paints a picture of some of the individuals who will be interviewed later. Understanding this literature will identify the gap expected to be minimized through the study.

### **Review of Reentry and Funding**

The United States leads the world with the highest number of currently incarcerated individuals, with more than 2.2 million; due to this excessive number of incarcerations, there is also a budget to help develop and maintain a robust criminal justice system (Walmsley, 2018). Although the budget is meant to preserve corrections and rehabilitation, the funding for rehabilitation programming often seems to see a small proportion of that. Although almost 68% of those released end up reincarcerated within the following 3 years, the U.S. Department of Justice continues to spend nearly \$300 billion on police and incarcerating individuals (Alper et al., 2018; Hyland, 2019). With a 34% increase in the incarceration rate of Americans between 2015-2018 and an ever-increasing rate of recidivism, a reentry and rehabilitation programming review is necessary (Walmsley, 2018).

Recidivism in the criminal justice system, seen as an actionable initiative by the Obama administration in 2011, saw reentry programs grow at the federal and state levels (Caporizzo, 2011). However, in line with this, the demographic of reentry programming has generally remained the same over the last two decades. Typically, White men with a low to medium risk of recidivism are set up for success in these programs. Through the institutionalized barriers put forth, there are arguments suggesting people with lower levels of education and socioeconomic status are set up to fail after release due to their cyclical relationship with their socioeconomic status as well as the use of prisons as a way to segregate those of lower socioeconomic status and standing (Hattery & Smith, 2010). Although many who need reentry services may not always be available due to geographic location, funding, or availability, the commonalities for those still in need remain consistent. Many formerly incarcerated people have limited positive social circles, negative perceptions or relationships with law enforcement, harmful hobbies, a history of substance abuse and mental health problems, and a lack of employment and shelter when they are released from incarceration.

### **California And Rehabilitation**

Since 2005, the California Department of Corrections has understood the importance of rehabilitation through reentry programming, creating the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and officially adding the “R” to the department in 2009 (Shaw, 2009). Due to the relatively young age of rehabilitation and reentry through CDCR's many initiatives, the resulting lack of research derives from at least five factors.

First, those actively participating in and vetted for programming are generally at little to no risk of reincarceration and require structural housing and therapeutic programming. Second, the population of those receiving services is usually not indicative of the people who need the services the most. Of those with the most limited resources, black and brown individuals are among the highest represented. Third, Nellis (2022) found that black and brown Americans are incarcerated five times more than their white counterparts for the same crimes. Due to this, California often has more people being released from incarceration with no resources available to them. These factors reveal a systematic injustice in the criminal justice system that trickles down to rehabilitation and reentry. The fourth factor is a general mistrust of the criminal justice system and those operating as leaders (i.e., correctional officers, wardens, and police officers).

Finally, it is often challenging for those who need reentry services to find CBRPs willing and able to take in individuals who have just been released from prison or jail due to lack of services, incorrect placements, availability, or even funding. This chapter will review the literature concerning the population needing reentry programming, their characteristics, and their relationship with the community where they are being released. It will also identify what successful reentry may appear and how to achieve it.

### **Limited Characteristics of Formerly Incarcerated Persons**

#### ***Race and Ethnicity***

Jones (2018) identified that of the 39 million residents of California, 239,000 are incarcerated. Of these, 82,000 comprise 41% Latinx, 27% Black, 26% White, 2% Asian, and 1% Indigenous (Jones, 2018). As of 2019, 1,623 per 100,000 blacks and 353 per



100,000 Hispanic adults were incarcerated in California. While 558 per 100,000 black and 146 per 100,000 Hispanic teenagers were incarcerated, this represented an overall ratio of 11 people of color for every three whites (Carson, 2020; The Sentencing Project, 2020). Though the number of people of color incarcerated is substantially higher than their white peers, whites significantly outweigh the number of people of color in rehabilitation programming.

Due to the perceived lower risk that white counterparts have compared to people of color, they are more likely to obtain funding, placement, and employment for reentry programming. The result of this is that people of color have less chance of entering and completing reentry programming compared to their white counterparts due to limited space. If no spots are open for an individual once released, they cannot go.

Although there is limited literature on race and ethnicity throughout the reentry community regarding those with successful completion of programming, there is evidence from as recently as 2020 showing that culturally, ethnically sensitive, and ecologically sound approaches to reentry programs can improve the overall outcomes for people of color (Skinner-Osei & Osei, 2020). Watson et al. (2018) have identified that within the ecological sphere of reentry, there exist “(1) professional influences, (2) political support, (3) social climate, (4) local infrastructure, (5) policy and legal climate, (6) relational climate, (7) target population(s), and (8) funding and economic climate” (Watson et al., 2018, p. 1).

Creating reentry programming that considers the ecological sphere of reentry in collaboration with actuarial justice can lead to a better-supplemented program for people

of color Watson et al. (2018). Suppose eight ecological spheres in reentry programming support people of color. In theory, their chances for successful rehabilitation will rise, giving black and brown people a chance at success like their white counterparts.

### ***Education/ Employment***

Harlow (2003) found that at least 16% of incarcerated individuals dropped out of school due to their involvement in criminal activities. Further, many confined individuals have admitted to leaving or being removed from educational institutions due to behavioral or academic problems as early as middle school (Harlow, 2003). Notably, the LS/CMI score is often higher for individuals who dropped out or were removed from educational institutions earlier than their counterparts who advanced further through grade levels due to the wording of the assessment. However, individuals may have identical intellectual scores or overall educational awareness, and their inability to complete standardized educational instruction before incarceration dramatically affects their assessment scoring, giving them either a lower or higher risk for recidivism after incarceration. Actuarial justice indicates that individuals with higher assessment scores will often repeatedly partake in criminal activities, thus directly correlating it to an individual's inability to complete standardized educational instruction.

The current statistics from the US Census of 2020 are due to the need for more literature on formerly incarcerated persons and subsequent employment or education. This indicates that of the entire Californian population – including those currently incarcerated – 88% of those aged 25 or older hold a high school degree or general equivalency diploma (GED). Of those 88%, 32.1% of those 25 or older have a Bachelor's

degree. Considering that most of the population is not incarcerated, the statistics for those currently incarcerated or having direct criminal justice involvement often have lower percentages of educational success.

Previously incarcerated individuals may also find themselves at a crossroads in new educational ventures. With increased virtual-based programs, educational facilities may have adapted only some policies to consider the formerly incarcerated.

Subsequently, based on previous criminal history, there may be individuals who are unable to continue or initially attend educational classes. For example, individuals who must register as a sex offender will not be able to be in the same classroom as another student who is under the age of 18. Although they may want to graduate from college, specific individuals may even be declined entry into an academic institution based on their criminal history.

Although obtaining educational services may be a difficult task when released, there are adult primary educational programs provided by local community school districts and community colleges that allow currently and formerly incarcerated individuals to participate in GED preparation if they have not already obtained a GED or High School Diploma, which can be an empowering opportunity for these individuals. Completing these programs allows people to get their GED or course credit and take those learned skills into the workforce and educational sphere. These academic programs create further opportunities upon release and entry into reentry programming.

However, to participate in these educational programs, an individual must complete their court-mandated programming while on criminal justice monitoring.

Education is a privilege that can be taken away in a criminal justice setting, whether an individual is incarcerated or released and still on criminal justice monitoring. When rules are not abided by or court-mandated programming is not completed, an individual who may have otherwise had the opportunity to complete their GED may no longer have that option.

Even with the limited employment opportunities for recently released offenders being well known, the severity of these limitations increased with a lack of educational backing. A 2010 longitudinal survey from Carson et al. (2021) revealed that approximately 33% of offenders released in 2010 could not find employment between 2010-2014, four years after they were released. This finding shows that although there are various reasons for a person being incarcerated, their incarceration still hinders their future capacity to attain gainful employment when individuals have limited traditional or vocational education for years after release.

### ***Criminogenic History***

One of the characteristics of actuarial justice is directly correlated to identifying and understanding one's criminogenic history. An individual's criminal history is typically assessed to evaluate and appropriately identify their therapeutic needs and the programming after incarceration. Considering both previous illegal actions and current charges, an individual with a more extended criminogenic history will end up in high-risk categories (Andrews et al., 2004).

A review of the LS/CMI and the number of criminogenic historical factors that are assessed and included as an emphasis on the individual's youth dispositions, prior

adult dispositions or convictions, present offenses, number of incarcerations, institutional misconduct, and any probation or parole breaches (Andrews et al., 2004).

Although the number of convictions or charges an individual has had may affect their programming, placement, and assessment score, the characterization of criminal activity may not. Those with a history of misdemeanors may have identical scores compared to their peers with felonies. For example, suppose one person has three charges of a misdemeanor of DUI while another has a felony of second-degree murder. In that case, these two individuals may have similar scores depending on how many times they had been incarcerated before their current offense and what those previous offenses, charges, and convictions were. These individuals are then released and placed into CBRP based on their assessments and CBRP availability.

### *Social Status*

Literature suggests that offenders with small or limited social circles are often at a greater risk of engaging in deviant or antisocial behavior than their positively socialized peers (Brindle et al., 2019; Fahmy, 2021; Prentky et al., 1997). Studies conducted in early adolescence suggest that individuals with peer support from negative influences may have increased offending behavior, thus perpetuating the theory that those with positive, supportive peer groups will, in turn, find themselves in favorable situations later on in life (Fahmy, 2021).

As in adolescence, social support is essential for those reintegrating into the community. This is the same for recently released individuals who may find that their community assistance has dwindled substantially due to the conviction of their crime,

connection with drugs or alcohol, or their general incarceration. There are stipulations regarding where an individual can go and when they can go there for different offenses, which may affect their social circle if they are not allowed to be in the county where they committed said offense or cannot maintain connections closer to home. For some individuals, being back where they were before incarceration is a recipe for re-incarceration. For example, some sexual offenses result in the offender no longer being permitted to access the internet, creating a burden for those previously incarcerated in a technological world where they can no longer connect with peers, apply for jobs online, or attend online schooling.

Outside of that, there are offenses in which individuals can reside only in specific geographic locations, and stipulations regarding those may change or be altered by local, city, state, or federal officials at any time. This creates a smaller circle for social needs to be met, thus subjecting recently released individuals to being surrounded by people of similar criminal backgrounds for an extended period after their release from incarceration or monitoring.

Finally, the inability of an individual to receive the same services that other community members enjoy can create a negative reputation for those trying to reintegrate into the community. For instance, a formerly incarcerated individual may not receive the same mental health services as somebody without a criminal record, thus creating a smaller community for them to engage with. Therefore, this can inflict an adverse status on those recently released and those with historical criminal records.

### ***Mental/Physical Health***

Often overrepresented in prisons throughout California, the mentally ill find themselves at the center of most criminal justice research (Barrenger et al., 2021). The ratio of individuals currently and formerly incarcerated against those able to help when assistance is sought is limited, as well as where formerly incarcerated persons can obtain said assistance.

Although mental health transitions can be difficult as it is, the uniformity that must be broken when released from incarceration adds a barrier to breaking through post-release. Fox (2016) argues that breaking down a person's individuality allows correctional justice staff to group incarcerated individuals by wearing prisoner-made uniforms (Fox, 2016). This transitions individuals from solitary to solidarity and from internal social-emotional to external social groups and can often lead to more mental health symptoms and shame through the use of community seclusion. While incarcerated, individuals are already isolated from former community entities and may have been for decades; because of this, both during incarceration and post-release, an individual may find themselves in a state of "maladaptive conditions about the self and one's capabilities" thus leading further into negative self-talk and negative mental health symptoms (Moore et al., 2018, p. 992).

Grouping does not end with uniformity of incarcerated people and extends throughout the correctional facility and reentry programming. In CBRPs, people are grouped by assessment needs, therapeutic needs, and previous criminal activity or substance abuse behavior. Individuals can be placed in units where they are subjected to

intensive treatments and forced to participate in programming as a part of their parole or probation conditions. There can be multiple reasons why a reentry program would group individuals: (1) to have cohesive intensive group treatments, (2) to have commonalities with those who have a similar criminal past, or (3) creation of community. The immense lack of individuality through the suppression of free expression often leads to feelings of loneliness, escalating into episodes of depression or despair (Baidawi et al., 2016). Those who need mental health services are referred to the same business, while those in need of physical treatments are placed in another. Their linkage to treatment is placed over their actual needs or continued needs once incarceration ends, creating a pass-off program where one organization takes in an individual and passes them off to another until the individual garners resources necessary to succeed or they are displaced through the system at hand (Barrenger et al., 2021).

As such, it is often beneficial for those working on their mental health while undertaking CBRPs to see licensed professionals, including psychotherapists, social workers, certified substance abuse counselors, and more. However, depending on what diagnoses might be made, singular or cooccurring, those individuals may not receive wrap-around services, including medication.

However, these may change over the years with a recent shift in institutionalization being viewed as a chronic health condition, where long-term incarceration often leads to chronic incapacitation, lasting a lifetime, even after release from formal incarceration (Druckeer, 2013). CBRPs are seeking ways to mitigate disadvantages and long-term impacts related to health and incarceration where they can.



Institutionalized individuals often have more difficulties than non-institutionalized concerning societal norms, social-emotional regulation, and community communication and engagement, creating more work for them when admitted to a CBRP.

Even after release and admission to a CBRP, a formerly incarcerated person who is institutionalized may experience victimization, trauma, lasting Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) effects, and physical ailments due to their trauma. These physical health conditions range from cardiorespiratory, musculoskeletal, and gastrointestinal disorders and an increased risk of psychiatric co-occurring conditions as well as the possible increased risk of self-harm and socioeconomic burden (Bisson et al., 2015) even after release from incarceration.

### **Obstacles to Successful Reintegration into the Community**

Based on limited current literature, obstacles to successful release and community reintegration cover various social, psychological, physiological, and socioeconomic difficulties. However, literature regarding the obstacles for those with additional support from CBRPs is almost nonexistent. Once individuals have successfully completed reentry programming and are no longer under criminal justice monitoring, it can be assumed that they would have similar obstacles. The purpose of this research is to assist in closing the gap in the literature regarding barriers to successful reintegration back into the community for those who are no longer on criminal justice monitoring and have completed reentry programming. This section will assist in identifying a limited set of obstacles that formerly incarcerated persons may face when reintegrating into the community post-reentry program. The current limited information is expected to expand

upon the completion of this research.

### *Social Obstacles*

Social connectedness is an innate human characteristic. Multiple studies showcase the need for positive social engagement and support for a successful reentry into the community (Barrick et al., 2014; Taylor, 2016; Wallace et al., 2016). Social support is the tangible support from friends, family, community members, or partners in various forms, including, but not limited to, “emotional, instrumental, or informational” (Fahmy, 2021, p. 1). Although emotional support may benefit some, additional support from family such as housing or transportation types of support from social circles are more likely to reduce recidivism (Mowen et al., 2019). Nevertheless, for many incarcerated, social groups are often part of why they are incarcerated. Drugs, alcohol, and gang affiliations are commonly connected back to incarcerated individuals, and their social groups reflect their interests, just as they do for anybody outside incarceration. Again, those noted as having positive social interactions throughout their life often continue to have positive social interactions; the same goes for those with deviant or socially unacceptable interactions.

Individuals incarcerated for an extended period are often subjected to violent, isolative, and dysfunctional environments. Many individuals incarcerated for years may be moved from facility to facility where violence may range from minimal to extreme. Due to the lack of autonomy, the choice to move from a medium security facility to a maximum is not left to the incarcerated individual but to the criminal justice professionals. Many jails and prisons throughout the US operate in a dormitory-style

bunking system. In such a system, 10-30 individuals stay in a room together. The individualistic nature can often subside after being put into a room with over 30 individuals one has never met. Others may find that they are becoming absorbed into a larger group. While incarcerated, the degree of individualization decreases, and the group mentality increases; new gangs, alliances, and protection circles are formed to get through the new lifestyle they must live (Shrivastava, 1973).

Creating these from scratch is necessary for those who have lost positive social groups, including critical connections with family, friends, and peers. Nevertheless, due to the lack of outside or community involvement with those who are currently incarcerated, they turn to their new peers and create these important social groups.

During reentry programming, many topics refer back to positive social groups. For example, the Courage to Change program (created by The Change Companies) (2017), found in many institutions and reentry programs throughout the US, created interactive journals for this exact purpose.

The Courage to Change program helps those in reentry programming learn and break down positive relationships, and relearning how to establish and maintain them can benefit people reintegrating into their communities. As one of the primary purposes of reentry programming is to reteach positive behaviors and mitigate negative or socially taboo ones, relearning how to maintain positive social relationships will reduce the obstacles formerly incarcerated individuals face while reintegrating into the community.

### ***Psychological Obstacles***

In recent years, mental health has grown as a socially popularized and commonly

discussed issue, which is no change for those in the criminal justice system. Often, incarcerated individuals will be subjected to isolative or solitary environments, physical and sexual violence, and a general sense of disconnectedness from the world around them. For instance, during a correctional facility's "lockdown," incarcerated individuals may not be able to call friends, family, and peers as they usually do throughout the week. This lockdown leads to more isolated time during incarceration and limited interactions with criminal justice professionals and other incarcerated peers. Many express loneliness, depression, or anxiety while incarcerated, only to find that this continues when released.

As staying out of prison may be difficult even for those without a mental illness, it was found by Billargeon et al. (2009) that those with a mental illness are more likely to recidivate back into the criminal justice system, presumably due to their inability to maintain cognitive health services when they are released from incarceration. As about 50% of the incarcerated population that is released ends up back in incarceration within two to three years, it is reasonable to postulate that many of the people who are released also have a mental illness (Awofeso, 2010; Billargeon et al., 2009; Lagan & Levin, 2002). With half of the incarcerated population cycling in and out of prison, the inability to maintain proper mental healthcare and services is not unfounded.

Mental illness is experienced by many who find themselves exiting and then re-entering the criminal justice system, creating a need for the incorporation of complex interventions for mental health disorders specific to justice-involved persons (Barrenger et al., 2019). These individuals have been found to experience multiple psychological barriers to their reintegration, including interference with mental illness, inaccessibility to

proper and consistent mental healthcare, and employer discrimination (Galletta et al., 2021). Thus, it is clear that these people require a high level of long-term psychological care that cannot be provided by probation, parole, or reentry and rehabilitation programming. Although reentry programming has a significant focus on mental health, the extreme needs of some formerly incarcerated individuals supersede the abilities of reentry programming. This need leaves these individuals unsuccessful in completing reentry programming and subsequently forces them back into the cycle of incarceration due to their inability to complete reentry services.

### ***Physiological Obstacles***

The psychological changes that occur in an individual's life after incarceration can also exacerbate the physiological changes. Although incarcerated people can utilize comprehensive healthcare services while affiliated with the criminal justice system, these services often abruptly halt after release. Many formerly incarcerated persons have come from neighborhoods with high poverty levels, alcohol and drug abuse, and lower levels of formal education, leading to higher risk factors for health complications (Glaser & Greifinger, 1993; Heigel et al., 2010).

According to Maruschak et al. (2015), between 2011 and 2012, almost half of surveyed incarcerated persons reported having a chronic illness, which does not stop when they are released from incarceration and into programming. The top reported chronic diseases were High Blood Pressure/Hypertension (26.3%), Asthma (20.1%), Arthritis/Rheumatism (12.9%), and heart-related problems (10.4%), which are known to be some of the leading natural killers in the US. Of these, more than 80% of those

previously incarcerated men have identified that they have one of the chronic illnesses while also having a history of substance use or abuse, identifying multiple high-risk chronic illnesses (Fahmy, 2021; Visher & Lattimore, 2007).

Due to the high number of healthcare needs within correctional facilities, substantially higher than that of the general population, the criminal justice system has become an increasingly important piece of the medical health picture for those currently incarcerated and after release (Bailo et al., 2021). 2012, California correctional facilities assisted with more than 2 million healthcare visits to incarcerated individuals (Bird & McConville, 2014). As people are released without services to follow up, their ailments will remain or worsen when attempting to reintegrate into the community, thus leading to more physical obstacles to overcome without legitimate resources.

It then becomes the responsibility of the formerly incarcerated person and the reentry programs to find and take these individuals to their medical appointments, obtain a primary care physician, and continue to follow-up care. Unfortunately, only a few reentry programs have the funding or availability to drive individuals to their medical appointments, let alone provide transportation for chronic illness, teach them how to utilize online appointment settings, and sometimes even communicate with medical professionals on behalf of the formerly incarcerated individual.

### ***Socioeconomic Obstacles***

One of the most apparent obstacles those recently released faces relates to socioeconomic status, historically and currently. Often, formerly incarcerated people will be at a higher risk for socioeconomic uncertainty because of the difficulties they face

(Harding et al., 2014). Finding the minimal needs of shelter and food can be one of the most significant difficulties; often, without employment, one cannot find shelter. Haverkate and Wright (2021) found in a study of women N=200, splitting between “certainty” and “uncertainty” of a variety of subjects, that over 33% of women found themselves in an uncertain socioeconomic standing after incarceration (Haverkate & Wright, 2021). Although CBRPs assist in that process for a short period, the stay is often insufficient for an individual to obtain independent housing, a credit score, and the funding to stand independently. Although physical, psychological, and social health are essential factors in an individual’s life, one cannot maintain stability in these areas if they do not have the bare minimum of food and shelter.

Socioeconomic insecurity can present in various ways, such as lack of shelter, stable and legal employment, inability to make and maintain rent regularly, and food insecurity. In another study, Harding et al. (2014) found that a quarter of participants were experiencing a cyclical state of material hardships wherein they fluctuated between tremendous despondency and survival when they were no longer incarcerated. As of 2017, over 90% of those previously incarcerated are in constant need of community support to provide a variety of emotional and physical needs, as well as the imperative support of housing needs (Fahmy, 2021; Nelson et al., 1999; Pettus-Davis et al., 2017).

While the difficulties for recently released individuals vary, some obstacles remain the same. After incarceration, one may need new governmental documentation; with proper documentation and support, it can be easier to obtain this. These difficulties lead to a cycle in which one needs documentation and, therefore, is unable to obtain

documentation. If one cannot get proper identification, it can result in a long wait to gain legal employment and housing, which is often also a stipulation of parole or probation. Eventually, this can lead to longer times that an individual remains between the extremes of desperation and survival, leading to more difficulties in obtaining a legal job, safe and stable housing, and regular food security.

## **Characteristics of Community-Based Reentry Programming**

### ***Initial Assessments***

Initial assessments often start while the individual is incarcerated. During the intake process of incarceration, an individual is given an LS/CMI assessment alongside a variety of other paperwork to determine the individual's risk level and needs. Upon release, they are often given a supplementary assessment, either the same evaluation or a mirrored one. Once the individual is released, those going to reentry programming have their files sent over from the incarceration facility to the CBRP for intake.

During the CBRP reentry intake, initial assessments such as the LS/CMI, the American Society of Addiction Medicine Assessment (ASAM), the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA) Scale, or the Correctional Mental Health Screen for Men (CMHS-M) are all used to identify potential risk factors ranging from drug use to reoffending in other ways (Andrews et al., 2004; University of Rhode Island, 1996). Intake specialists use these assessments to help identify which facility they will place the formerly incarcerated in and what other programming needs may be necessary for the individual regardless of gender.

When individuals are assessed when entering CBRP programming, they are asked



several mental health questions regarding their anti-social behaviors, mood swings, empathy and sympathy levels, and psychiatric hospital visitations (Ford et al., 2007). Of these mental health risk assessment questions, those who answer “yes” to six or more are considered for referral by the case manager to a community-based psychiatrist. If deemed immediately necessary, this may prolong the start date and time for the released individual to commence reentry programming, a condition of their release.

Almost all initial assessments within California’s CBRP facilities utilize actuarial justice when identifying the level of service, care, or associated risk factors for the individual, both during the length of the sentence and after in CBRP programming. The higher the number, the more “at risk” an individual is deemed to any possible needs or programming they may have. While the purpose of these initial assessments is to better understand the baseline for somebody coming into incarceration, Actuarial Justice insinuates that this may be a detriment to them as well (Harcourt, 2007). Regardless of how often they have been incarcerated, the initial assessment gives an individual an arbitrary number, increasing or decreasing upon release based on their interactions and programming participation. Initial assessments often start while the individual is incarcerated.

### ***Case Management During Community-Based Reentry Programming.***

Case management has been positioned between licensed therapeutic practices and documentation by trained professionals to understand better the challenges of those attempting to reintegrate into the community through CBRPs. Throughout California CBRPs, case management systems have been implemented to create a streamlined

program and level of expertise regarding insight into incarcerated people. During the 1960s and 1970s, case management

Strategies [were used] to reduce recidivism and address mental disorders, developmental disabilities, joblessness, homelessness, HIV/AIDS, and other severe medical conditions and such offenses as domestic violence and substance abuse among adult and juvenile arrestees, probationers, and parolees. (Travis & Healey, 1999, p. 1).

Although there has been much development since the 1960s in legal, criminology, and technological advances, approaches to case management have remained the same. Due to the stability of case management over the last few decades, case managers have been able to continue focusing on anger, emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, overcoming family challenges, moral reasoning, and others (Carey Group Publishing, 2022) while referring more significant or out of scope issues to other agencies with more experience. Although sometimes challenging to maintain for chronic illness and needs, this process is helpful for those who may need limited help in referrals and more direct assistance in other aspects of their community reintegration.

The CBRP case manager's job is to help the individual utilize the tools they have learned throughout the reentry programming to reintegrate into the community with appropriate pro-social behavior. Following the release, the job of case management is to track the individual throughout their reintegration programming. Although the CBRP employs the case manager, the formerly incarcerated individual has much more freedom and autonomy during their CBRP program. Weekly meetings with participants in the

reentry program allow for continued awareness by the case management team, CBRP leadership, and parole or probation to confirm placements, identify needs, and, most importantly, assist individuals with difficulty reintegrating into the community. These conversations ensure that the problems encountered by the individual can be identified during reintegration, setting them up for success upon completion of the reentry program.

During the case management process, it is the responsibility of the participant to be actively engaged. Active engagement in community-based reentry programs with the case management team includes the following:

1. Attending all necessary therapeutic programming
2. Sobriety and substance use and abuse classes
3. Actively applying for employment
4. Participating in weekly one-on-one meetings with case management staff
5. Obeying all rules and regulations of the CBRP housing
6. Completion of any probation or parole requirements upon admittance to the reentry program

Those who do not actively engage in programming risk being dismissed from the program and receiving possible parole or probation violations. If dismissal occurs, these formerly incarcerated people will find themselves without support and collaboration with other entities to help them reintegrate. They will also often lose privileged access to semi-public services curated explicitly for those going through reentry services, such as free educational services for adults (either high school or associate degree level), regular

access to free mental health services, and regular access to medical services and vocational services as well.

### ***Community Reintegration***

For individuals to complete reentry programming, it must be noted that they need to be able to reintegrate back into the community that no longer trusts them. However, there is literature about individuals reintegrating into the community after incarceration. Again, literature is essentially nonexistent for the specific population of individuals who are released from imprisonment and successfully complete reentry programming before fully integrating back into the community. Therefore, the following limited information will showcase studies related to general community reintegration without extensive elaboration, as the individuals in these studies may be similar but not the same, and any insinuation of knowledge would dampen the perceptions of this future research by creating narratives for this population which may not fit.

Nevertheless, studies between 2016-2020 showcased that the difficulties of reintegration back into the community were negatively affected due to the stigma around a person's incarceration (Moore et al., 2016; Sinko et al., 2020). This stigma, often internalized by those subjected to it, can create a community wherein an individual may feel valueless, loathsome, and untrustworthy (Duvnjak et al., 2022; Flood, 2018). Reintegration can be supported in various ways, such as job placement, social support, and stable housing (Galletta et al., 2021). CBRP attempts to combine case management and community reintegration services by creating programming and coursework for incarcerated persons, preparing them for release and programming while using similar

coursework at the CBRP once they are released (Couloute, 2018).

CBRP allows formerly incarcerated persons to develop a plan before release from incarceration, identifying where they will live, who their emergency contacts are if they have a job lined up, and what their support system outside of incarceration looks like. This collaboration of programming between CDCR and CBRPs allows those beginning their reentry process to have a better understanding of the barriers that come with community reintegration after incarceration. Those who have a history of incarceration often have more difficulty obtaining employment, housing, and educational opportunities.

Many previously incarcerated people find themselves susceptible to the pitfalls of economic insecurity due to the difficulties that they face when they are released back into the community (Harding et al., 2014). Whether the formerly incarcerated have an extensive history of incarceration or this is their first time, they may still have difficulty with the documentation needed to obtain proper and stable housing, jobs, and insurance.

The lack of knowledge of new processes and adapted technologies may lead to an overwhelming sense of inability to complete the necessary tasks to get back previously acquired or even new public benefits they may need or be required to have. This causes a disconnect from the community, which they again attempt to reenter. According to a study by Visher and Lattimore (2007), among 935 currently incarcerated men, the most requested community needs were more education, general financial assistance, driver's licenses, job training, and employment, which they are often unable to obtain while still incarcerated. Of those 935, more than half indicated they require necessary and immediate needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, financial assistance, and governmental

identification, such as a birth certificate or social security card (Visher & Lattimore, 2007). When individuals are released, they need more community necessities. Since they have limited resources, their ability to obtain hierarchal needs such as immediate psychological needs, safety, belongingness, esteem, or self-actualization is also hindered, creating a longer loop for the cycle of needs to continue (Maslow, 1943).

### **Summary**

This literature review highlights a clear gap between existing literature regarding the needs of those who have been released from incarceration, have completed reentry programming, and are no longer under criminal justice monitoring. However, there is extensive literature on those who recidivate and those currently incarcerated, and programming reviews, research focusing on this specific population still needs to be explored, if not nonexistent.

Individuals who have completed CBRP may have a significant advantage compared to their non-programmatic counterparts with similar backgrounds and assessment scores. For example, obtaining housing directly from prison may give an individual a sense of belonging within the community and the direct support they may not otherwise have outside of CBRP.

With direct placements, case managers, job opportunities, and more, it can be suggested that an individual who has completed CBRP will have different characteristics or have mitigated issues when reintegrating into the community. Instead, the formerly incarcerated individual should find themselves with more knowledge and assistance to live a productive and law-abiding life after their full release from criminal justice

monitoring and successful completion of CBRP.

With at least half of the released population recidivating within two to five years, there is a clear need for sufficient skills and services to remain out of incarceration, let alone reintegrate back into their communities as productive members (Awofeso, 2010; Billargeon et al., 2009; Lagan & Levin, 2002). Of those who recidivate, approximately half have a history of substance abuse and a record of chronic physical and mental illness (Maruschak et al., 2015). Though the number of psychological and physical conditions is exacerbated in those with criminal justice involvement, people of color are often at a higher risk for these exacerbated conditions than their white counterparts (Nellis, 2022; Ortiz & Jackey, 2019). Actuarial justice quantifies this through the history of an individual, including race and health. It produces a systematic calculation, creating a number for simplifying and enumerating the individual's nuances and life history (Hannah-Moffat, 2012).

This study investigated whether actuarial justice is an effective way to continue quantifying a person's lived experiences in and out of the criminal justice system. It also identified whether the quantification of their assessment could be correlated to their perception of needs versus what the assessment indicated they needed, which is the CBRP. In turn, this helped identify whether actuarial justice truly assists criminal justice providers in identifying those who need long-term care post-release and services from those who do not.

Interviews of selected formerly incarcerated individuals who have completed reentry programming and are no longer on criminal justice monitoring will generate data

to be analyzed using phenomenological studies. The phenomenological theoretical methodology will be developed from the data gathered during the research process. Chapter Three will detail the method for this research.



### Chapter 3: Research Method

This research aimed to identify what previously incarcerated persons believe is the key to their success after completing state-funded reentry programs. By identifying what participants believe contributes to their success and possibly the success of others in programming, researchers can undertake more research in the future to create programs leading to more successful reentry programs nationwide. This chapter includes the design for research that allowed for a better understanding of what the perceptions of those who have completed reentry programming may have needed.

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

This research was focused on the relationship between formerly incarcerated persons' perceptions of reentry programs after completion and removal of criminal justice monitoring and the perceived needs based on actuarial justice by criminal justice systems. A primary aim of the research was to explore the experiences of formerly incarcerated persons when they have reintegrated into society and better understand what they need to do to maintain an active and stable reintegration. Thus qualitative research was used. The qualitative approach "involves systematic and contextualized research processes to interpret how humans view, approach, and make meaning of their experiences, contexts, and the world" (Ravitch & Carl, 2021, p. 4). With a positivist view, the qualitative research completed in this investigation helps to identify what life events and social phenomena can be described by those formerly incarcerated after their sentence and how they can be explained through immutable certainties (Berthelsen et al., 2009).

The qualitative approach utilized in this research is phenomenological, and semistructured interviews were adopted. The phenomenological method is used to gain knowledge of individuals' lived experiences after experiencing or while experiencing a unique situation (Neubauer et al., 2019). This approach is used to understand the essence of a particular phenomenon better, in this case, community reintegration for those who have successfully gone through reentry programming in California after incarceration and their perceptions of their programming needs versus what they were placed into. Using a phenomenological approach in this research allowed me to connect with a particular group of individuals throughout California who have a history of incarceration in California and a history of successful completion of CBRPs.

As all types of phenomenological methods come from different approaches, an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used for this research. IPA utilizes a blended approach to thoroughly examine a phenomenon through the participant's personal and lived experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019; Tuffour, 2017). As IPA is a qualitative approach, the continued goal of understanding similarities in participants' "what, why, and how" will be completed through individual interviews (Tuffour, 2017, p. 1). The primary objective in selecting a qualitative phenomenological study was to systematically identify how formerly incarcerated individuals feel, reflect, and prepare as they organize to leave incarceration, go through reentry programming within the community, and return as free citizens to the community. There is a significant gap between academic knowledge of what reduces recidivism of formerly incarcerated persons in reentry programming and what those who are going through reentry

programming believe reduces success, so the following guiding research questions were advanced:

1. What are the perceptions of formerly incarcerated individuals who have gone through and completed reentry programming?
2. What are formerly incarcerated individuals' perceptions of the connection between Community Based Reentry Programming and recidivism into the criminal justice system?

Through these research questions, I identified particulars related to participating in CBRPs after incarceration and the success or lack thereof for those who complete the time required in said programming by their criminal justice monitoring system. Providing insider context to the needs and perceptions of those directly affected by CBRP assisted in the ever-changing rules and regulations regarding the programming and possible funding around said programming.

### **Role of Researcher**

As the sole researcher on this dissertation, it was necessary to work with local reentry programs to help identify previous participants interested in programming. Although my current role is as an associate governmental program analyst for the State of California, no one interviewed for this dissertation had any current connection with the program where I am currently employed. All participants who agreed to be in this study were asked to sign a consent form indicating that they decided to do this interview voluntarily and had no personal connection or relationship with me. As the participants in this study may have gone through programming in places where I had previously been

employed, part of the stipulation for participating in this research was that they are no longer on criminal justice monitoring. This effectively created a barrier for any persons still on criminal justice monitoring and participating in programming. Therefore, only those individuals no longer in programming or monitoring could participate in the research.

Since none of the participants in this research lived at or participated in programming at the place of my current employment, there was no basis of power. However, as someone working with individuals who have a history of traumatic experiences and many experiences in authoritative dynamics, I am aware of the possibilities of power dynamics that may come into play from an academic researcher to a voluntary participant. With that information, I needed to take all necessary steps to create a system where participants knew they had full voluntary rights to withdraw from this research at any time or not to participate. All participants were given the same information that they were not obligated to participate in this research; all participation was voluntary, and there were no repercussions should a person choose not to participate.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

Due to the nature of the study, participants were chosen based on their ability to contribute. As this will be a development upon the already established theory of actuarial justice, I used use a theory-based process known as theoretical sampling to assist in data collection and create an evolved development of the new theory. Theoretical sampling allows me to seek “additional information based on concepts developed from initial data

analysis” (Ligita et al., 2020, p. 116).

The population of this study was 11 adults who were formerly incarcerated, had completed reentry programming in California, and were no longer being monitored by any criminal justice entity. The inclusion criteria for this research were formerly incarcerated adults 18 or older who had participated in and completed reentry programming. Their crimes and sentences may have occurred as juveniles, but during their reentry programming, they must have been adults and complete reentry programming as legal adults. Due to these parameters, I worked with local reentry programs and classes to connect with those who have completed reentry programs throughout California. Most reentry programs are co-ed, so multiple genders participated in the study. This took place by posting flyers in communal areas, specifically in locations where previously incarcerated people either reside or are actively engaged in programming. These flyers specified that this was a research project and gave limited detailed information. They were encouraged to sign up through email, where I called or emailed them to set up a time and day that worked best for the interview process.

I initially aimed to obtain 10–15 willing and consenting participants, and ultimately 11 were obtained. In the hope of obtaining an equal or almost equal amount of self-identifying men and women for this study, the initial approximation of 10–15 participants was chosen. The final set of participants included five self-identifying female participants and six self-identifying male participants. This was a good outcome given that there are substantially more men incarcerated than women throughout California, with a ratio of 30 correctional facilities for men to one for women. It is also important to

note that successful completion does not mean that the individual is cured of any mental illness, is employed, or has stable housing. It means that they have only completed programming. Due to the research parameters, many individuals have a history of felonious criminal activity and have been assessed as having a record of or potential substantial community misconduct. Although all individuals had different criminal backgrounds and charges, all willing and able participants were asked the same questions to help determine the similarities and differences between their successful counterparts for continuity.

To obtain 11 formerly incarcerated individuals, I contacted professional contacts within state-based reentry programming to obtain participants through social media, community board postings, and direct engagement at community meetings. Only after IRB approval were the flyers utilized to reach out to participants and networks. In addition, I worked with participants and CBRPs to confirm the successful completion of reentry programming. Many who completed reentry programming received a certificate for their hard work; those who have the certificate will be automatically confirmed, while those who do not may have to prove successful completion of reentry programming in another way. After the individuals were selected, I set up interview appointments with the participants via Zoom, with no cameras used to protect their anonymity. The selection of respondents depended on a first-come, first-serve basis. Individuals who reached out to me first could actively participate in the research, while others were placed on a waiting list.

## **Instrumentation**

For this study, the research instrument (see Appendix A) included a detailed questionnaire developed by me. This two-part document first provided an overview of the participant's demographics, educational background, socioeconomic status, family history, and support, and limited prior criminal history related to their CBRP, physical and mental health, and their experiences in the reentry program, as well as the relational questions of what they are currently doing in their life. The secondary questions related to their current situation, housing, employment, social needs and connections, and general mental and physical health. I created some of the instrument questions. However, some questions overlapped with and were informed by studies conducted by Owen and Bloom (1995), LS/CMI, URICA, CMHS-M, and CMHS-W (Andrews et al., 2004); University of Rhode Island, 1996; (Ford et al., 2007). The questionnaire (Appendix A) was validated through an assessment and feedback from three Walden faculty members, both subject matter experts in the topic and methodology experts.

As mentioned, all assessments are used in different reentry programs, allowing researchers and intake specialists to understand the participant's baseline when entering programming. The findings of these assessments numerically place each individual into their specific programming, connecting a numerical value with their risk for violence, recidivism, and drug use, again citing actuarial justice theories. These assessments showcase an unmet need in community interventions, socioeconomic self-efficiency, familial and interpersonal social problems, external community supervision, and programmatic expansion.

The research instrument, prepared in collaboration with learned assessments and questionnaires, was the primary source of data collection through semi-structured interviews with formerly incarcerated adult individuals who have completed reentry programming and are no longer on criminal justice monitoring in California. Any modifications of the survey instrument reflected a conversational style with the participant, which was documented.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The use of interviews in qualitative research can yield fascinating results. The role interviews play in developing theories allows for an open discussion between participants and researchers, allowing a more in-depth understanding of the meaning and experiences in a participant's life. As mentioned previously, data collection consisted of 11 individual participant reviews. Each interview lasted approximately one to two hours and used a semi-structured interview (see Appendix A). A semi-structured interview is defined asking a set of ordered predetermined questions yet allowing for organic conversation to take place as well, creating a conversational style between the participant and I created to better understanding of the intricacies of an individual's life (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Bayeck, 2021; Edwards & Holland, 2013). Each interview took place online via the Zoom platform, wherein I utilized the internal recording mechanism to record the interview. It was of grave importance that the participants' anonymity was protected and was not shared throughout this study. If the participant chose to participate via Zoom for this research, they were asked to turn their camera off and change their screen name to protect their anonymity.



Through the collection, data were recorded, transcribed, and broken down into categories for further coding after the interviews between the participants and me. The predetermined questions allowed me to ask specific questions about the necessary data collection for this research, allowing flexibility if interesting subjects arose.

The interview questions included demographics, criminogenic history, and personal experiences during reentry programming. Before each interview, participants were asked to sign an informed consent/assent form. All participants read or had read the informed consent/assent form. It was assumed that each interview would last approximately one hour. After the interviews, within the next seven days, I sent the transcripts to the participants for member checking. During this time, the participant was asked if anything needed to be changed or corrected or if additional information should be added to this transcript. Participants were given approximately five to seven days to review their transcripts before I finalized them. As the participants were formerly incarcerated and no longer on criminal justice monitoring, the formatting of their interviews depended on their technological accessibility, knowledge, and time off. During this time, I used a variety of ways to connect with the participants, including Zoom calls and in-person conversations, all of which will be recorded. The timeline for the data collection was two to four interviews per day.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The phenomenological method has a set of procedures for data analysis (Chun Tie et al., 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Open, axial, and selective coding of interviews allows for developing categories of information, interconnecting the categories, and

finally, creating and building a story that connects the categories by completing a set of additional theoretical propositions related to actuarial justice. Using this coding allowed me to understand better what participants are doing, how they are doing, and often why they are doing it in a research-based setting and be able to identify themes within the multiple conversations correctly (Gubrium et al., 2008; Williams & Moser, 2019).

Coding systematically identifies concepts, similarities, and comparisons throughout the data (Chun Tie et al., 2019). The codes put together by researchers symbolize “tags or labels” used to organize the data and tell a story or explain a theme across multiple participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2021, p. 264). They further connect participants through pattern identification with their lived experiences, perceptions, and, in the case of this research, legal and criminogenic history. Initial coding is the beginning process in this methodology, as understanding the similarities between how each participant is crucial. This process identifies initial patterns and preliminary labeling (Chun Tie et al., 2019). Through the initial coding process, researchers typically utilize “open coding” when memos are highlighted or labeled somehow (Ravitch & Carl, 2021, p. 264). Once the categories are defined in the coding process, the groupings are built throughout the research process and can be referenced again throughout the data coding process. Moreover, once data has been coded, the researcher can identify patterns through the dimensionalities of the data collected.

After collecting the data, assembling the data in new ways refers to axial coding. As the secondary coding cycle occurs, the codes are reorganized into various categories (Saldaña, 2016). Using these categories and reorganization allows for developing “axis”

categories throughout the data, which other categories revolve around (Saldaña, 2016, p. 11). This paradigm will enable me to identify accidental circumstances and precise approaches and assist me in identifying the interviewing conditions as it delineates the significance of this phenomenon. Furthermore, the axial coding process led me to a storyline translated from raw data to syntax. During the final stages of the process, provisional propositions and postulations can be obtained, allowing for the creation of theories.

### ***Open Coding***

According to Williams and Moser (2019), open coding is the “first level” of coding, which consists of examining field notes for prominent information and grouping. The purpose of open coding is to allow a breakdown of the transcripts into ongoing themes throughout the furtherment of data collection. After collecting and examining the participants’ responses, researchers typically filter through those responses and allow for better arrangement and organization of similar words, phrases, concepts, and themes (Williams & Moser, 2019). This process creates dimensions for future categories, thus reducing the original database into a smaller set of thematic categories that more appropriately categorize the progression of participant-related exploration.

### ***Axial Coding***

Axial coding is the second level of coding and focuses on the identification of creating more concise “emergent themes” while further “refining, alignment, categorization and themes” (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 50). After the initial development of categories, a single category will emerge as the primary social

phenomenon related to currently incarcerated individuals participating in reentry programming. The exploration of interrelationships between categories begins to take shape through axial coding. Axial coding assists in a better understanding of interrelationships in “causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariance, and condition” (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 51). Axial coding creates a more explicit understanding of the thematic relationships as they are expressed, reviewed, and categorized (Williams & Moser, 2019).

### ***Selective Coding***

The third level of coding is selective coding, and it supports the researcher in creating a thematic and cohesive storyline through the combination of the two previous coding methods. By the time the researcher arrives at this stage of the coding process, they will be able to visually, succinctly, accurately, and effectively showcase the total summation of the cumulative coding process (Williams & Moser, 2019). The visualization that this portrays can support a researcher in creating a theoretical model. However, in the case of this specific research, the selective coding allowed for the additional creation of a connected theoretical model for actuarial justice and the construction of a further, more specific, and modernized hypothesis.

## **Issues of Trustworthiness**

### **Validity of the Study**

Validity is necessary to accomplish diversity through systematic methods of executing and evaluating the study’s rigor (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To ensure the validity of this research, the researcher needed to look for uniformity and discrepancies among

each participant continually. Therefore, it was understood that all participants may provide evidence against the original theories created for this dissertation. Further understanding and investigation by the researcher will assist in finding alternative explanations from important participants and criminal justice professionals.

### ***Credibility***

As with all forms of validity and trustworthiness, it showcases the researcher's capacity to understand all the complexities presented within a study and explain, with evidence, patterns within the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Thick descriptions are presented using triangulation, member checking, or participant validation, and all positive and negative cases are discussed. This allows for prolonged engagement in the field and the presence of an external auditor, as noted by the participants (Conrad et al., 2011; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

The credibility of this research was determined in multiple ways. Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) report that clarification of any personal researcher bias, discussion of repeated engagement in the field, providing readers with necessary detail (thick description), checking on whether the setting and process are realistic, triangulation, presentation of negative instances or discrepancies, and peer debriefing with colleagues. Using any of these noted strategies to confirm credibility, researchers can use multiple ways to confirm credibility numerous times, ensuring the validity of their research as they continue forward.

### ***Transferability***

Transferability refers to one or more researchers' capacity to take the currently

stated research and apply it in another forum. Specifically, understanding how plausible it may be to replicate this study with a similar process, setting, and community (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Researchers' ability to strengthen the transferability of their topic allows others to recreate similar research in different settings or communities, with a heightened ability to find similar conclusions among a wider variety of participants.

As with any subcategory of validity, some criteria permit researchers to cross-reference their research. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2018), the criterion for trustworthiness is purposeful sampling, thick descriptions of "shared or vicarious experiences" or findings, as well as thick descriptions regarding "background, data," and other "elements of shared experience(s)..." (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018, p. 205).

### ***Dependability***

Dependability denotes the capacity for the research process to be transparent, documented, legal, logical, and traceable (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The data's stability showcases the research's dependability while requiring that researchers have a reasonable argument in which the data collected and projected aligns. In other words, the dependability of research relies on the researcher's ability to answer in truth and transparency the research questions with data, either qualitative or quantitative, that are congruent (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

### ***Confirmability***

Scrutinizing the objectivity of the research and researcher refers to confirmability. Confirmability examines the suggestion that qualitative researchers do not claim to be objective (Guba, 1981; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). With this, Ravitch and Carl (2021) report

that confirmability aims to explore and acknowledge [researchers] biases and prejudices and how they can be shown through interpretations of data and experiences with participants. This also ensures that the researcher takes a reflexive approach throughout the research process. This can be done through check-ins with the committee team, self-check-ins with questions, journaling, and more. Understanding the need for transparency through reflexivity throughout this study allows the researcher to keep space for new and everchanging ideas and interactions from the participants.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Many ethical boundaries were taken into consideration for this dissertation. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH) (2016), there are seven main principles for ethical research: (a) social and clinical value; (b) scientific validity; (c) fair subject selection; (d) favorable risk-benefit ratio; (e) independent review; (f) informed consent; (e) Respect for potential and enrolled subjects. For this specific dissertation, considering those six and combining them with the University of Walden's expectations as well as qualitative ethical approaches by Ravitch and Carl (2021), there are six tenets this research is laid upon (a) the URR and IRB ethical approvals; (b) informed consent or assent; (c) research relationships; (d) research boundaries; (e) reciprocity; (f) transparency; and (g) confidentiality. These ethical expectations apply to all participants; however, extra attention to detail for ethical and legal issues was needed for special or vulnerable populations, such as formerly incarcerated individuals participating in this research.

The US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) updated its statute 45

CFR 46 in 2022. Of which issues regulations relating to the additional safeguards for currently incarcerated individuals participating in research. Although the participants in this study were no longer incarcerated, on probation, parole, or under any criminal justice monitoring, the same ethical safeguards were utilized when conducting the research. Due to the possible institutionalization of each of the participants, individuals were carefully walked through the process, including but not limited to (1) data collection, (2) confidentiality, (3) anonymity, and (4) final publications.

The research complied with the regulations of HHS, the University of Walden, and NIH, as well as the six tenets of ethics previously stated. Interviewing formerly incarcerated individuals regarding their perceptions of their experiences of reentry programming is research. It is material to the lives of those currently and formerly incarcerated at any given time. Each participant in this study approved a written or verbal format, sometimes both, which may be revoked at any time per the participant's discretion. The University of Walden IRB examined this proposed research to ensure further compliance regarding validity, ethics, and regulations concerning the research of incarcerated people.

Each participant was a volunteer participant who was asked to sign a consent form allowing recording, memo taking, and follow-ups regarding the completed research. There were minimal risks to participating in this research study, including emotional risks that may affect somebody's mood when asked to remember negative experiences. Other risks to consider were social consequences within the formerly incarcerated community and reentry or rehabilitation community. Any participants who volunteered to participate



in this research were kept confidential through pseudonyms. I would refer the participant to licensed psychologists and social workers for any psychological matters that arose with participants during the interviews or afterward. During the interview process, if there was any inclination toward abnormal psychiatric behavior, I would have immediately ceased the interview process and contacted the participant's emergency contact or other emergency services deemed physically or mentally necessary. The interviews were conducted in complete privacy. Assurance was given in alignment with the University of Walden and HHS for the confidentiality of any collected data.

Although I currently works with community-based reentry programs in California, there were no personal relationships outside of possible working relationships with any participants that needed to be declared or would constitute a conflict of interest. Any participants who participated in this research did so in their free time and of their free will. In no way was I personally affiliated with any study participants. As a researcher and academic, I understand the seriousness of confidentiality for vulnerable populations and have worked to have no direct oversight for those who may participate in this study.

Due to the vulnerabilities of formerly incarcerated populations, maintaining the confidentiality of those participating in the study is essential. I made every effort to preserve the confidentiality of the participants and the information shared. Participants who met me through online platforms such as Zoom had the opportunity to keep their cameras off, assisting in their anonymity. Each formerly incarcerated participant completed an informed consent/assent form. All participants read or had read to them the

Informed Consent/Assent Form, which was accessible to all participants regardless of language or literacy. For continuity, any signed documentation and notes regarding each participant were copied and given to the participant upon request.

Due to the nature of this study, questions about the individual's prior conviction were directly related to the programming placement. Many individuals no longer incarcerated or in therapeutic programming enjoy discussing their previous criminal history, and they were not forced to. However, to better understand the participants' relevant historical knowledge and perceptions of programming and personal needs.

Printed interview questions were used to guide the interview and were retained for publication. These forms will be retained for up to five years. After the completion and collection of data, the data were stored in a locked filing cabinet to maintain the confidentiality of the participants while also maintaining the ability to refer to the documentation later for further research.

None of the data collected contained the participants' real names, their geographic location, place of incarceration, name of CBRP they have participated in, or any other identifying factors. To maintain anonymity, I used pseudonyms to de-identify participants for those viewing the research later. I kept a master list of the participants' names and matching pseudonyms in a journal for this dissertation. Upon completing the dissertation, the master list and journal will be destroyed. Those digital items will be in a password-protected digital vault, allowing for the proper security protocol for participant protection and research expectations. This collection and protection of documentation allows both privacy and orderliness should there be a request by any future researchers to continue

similar research for any future publications.

At the end of this research, upon publication, the participants, as well as any other CBRPs that have provided information or assisted in the collection or collaboration of obtaining participants, will receive copies of this study. Although they will have access to the final findings, they will need access to the raw data collected, which will be held for five years for further research and then promptly destroyed.

### **Summary**

This study aimed to identify the extensive gap in the literature and effective strategies in the justice system to assist individuals when admitted into CBRPs. The survey instrument gathered data concerning the perceptions and experiences of formerly incarcerated people who successfully completed CBRP. The methodology for this research is a phenomenological qualitative study, which expands on the antiquated theory of actuarial justice through independent interviews. Chapter 4 will detail the data collection and analysis.

## Chapter 4: Results

This study sought to understand the perceptions and knowledge of previously incarcerated persons. Specifically, it examined what these individuals believe they require to actively, stably, and successfully reintegrate into the community after being released from incarceration only after completing CBRP. This research aims to better understand the needs of those with lived experience compared to the requirements laid before those participating in these programs. Considering the contextual background and review of this information, the research questions were:

- RQ 1: What are the perceptions of formerly incarcerated individuals who have gone through and successfully completed reentry programming?
- RQ 2: What are formerly incarcerated individuals' perceptions of the connection between CBRP and recidivism into the criminal justice system?

Throughout this chapter, I showcase various aspects of the research. These include the research setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and, finally, the results.

### **Setting**

To participate in this study, participants needed to have a set of lived experiences that made them eligible. All participants, regardless of race, gender, or any other identifying markers, must have been incarcerated in California and successfully completed CBRP in the state. While participants can no longer be under criminal justice monitoring, they may still be involved in working with the population. Some participants reported that although they have not been on criminal justice monitoring for years, they

have made it their life's work to continue working with those with experience in the criminal justice system. Therefore, instead of going through the programming one time and then no longer participating in said programming, they are continually living through the CBRP requirements and limitations as a staff member through the eyes of their participants. Although the direct participant may have had a specific experience, reliving this experience, or similar ones through the eyes of those they are helping or working with, may have influenced their experience both past and present. Subsequently, some of the participants were considered lifers or long-term offenders who had been given sentences of 25 years or more. Many of the participants who identified with these titles also indicated that they were incarcerated either multiple times throughout their lives or that they were incarcerated one time when they were very young. Regardless of the offense committed or the time incarcerated, all participants had a shared experience in CBRP in California. However, the population that participated in this research showcases the diversity and overarching variety of walks of life that lead each participant to incarceration.

### **Demographics**

As noted, all participants had previously been incarcerated and then completed CBRP and are no longer on criminal justice monitoring. This study featured five female-identifying participants and six male-identifying participants. Out of the 11, seven reported being under the age of 18 when they were first arrested or had interactions with the criminal justice system; of those, about half had one-time interactions at the age of 18 with the criminal justice system, leading them to long-term offenses and incarcerations

under the age of 18. Meanwhile, only four participants had first-time interactions and incarcerations when they were over the age of 18 years old. Of the 11 participants, 45% reported being convicted as lifers or long-term offenders, while 54% were not.

Multiple responses from the 11 participants indicated that at least 45% have no children. In contrast, 36% have more than three children, with a singular participant noting that they have four or more children and one noting that they do indeed have children but did not share how many. Of these indications, almost all six participants who reported having a child or children also indicated that they are still involved in their children's lives regardless of the child's age. This led to a better understanding of the seven participants currently in a relationship with a partner or significant other after incarceration. At the same time, the other four reported not being in a relationship, and one of the four was a reported widow. This gave them a thorough understanding of the nuances of their particular family systems as they progressed and fully reintegrated into their communities.

Regardless of other extenuating circumstances, all participants noted some formal education, wherein 9% noted that they only have a high school diploma or GED. In comparison, 18% reported having a high school diploma or GED and some college courses. Of those outside the 27% with no formal collegiate degree, 45% have no college degree but do possess some formal college education. Of those noted, many participants reported completing a degree and still needing to finish it. Outside of those with no reported formal college degree, 9% reported that they had earned an associate's degree. In comparison, 27% reported earning a bachelor's degree. Almost all participants

reported that they had either started their formal education while incarcerated or completed it while incarcerated.

Recognizing that nearly half of the participants were incarcerated for more than 25 years, and more than half of them were incarcerated at least once before the age of 18, it was revealed that 81% were employed in a full-time or part-time capacity before being incarcerated. Meanwhile, of the 19% of unemployed participants, only one was legally underage and could not be unemployed. Finally, it was revealed that after incarceration for all participants, only two out of the 11 are currently unemployed. See Table 1 for a full outline of these demographics.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

ID	Gender	Race	Currently Employed	Sentence Term
Participant A	Female	White	No	≤ 10 Years
Participant B	Male	Mixed	Yes (FT)	≤ 10 Years
Participant C	Male	Mexican	Yes (FT)	LWOP
Participant D	Female	Black	Yes (FT)	≤ 10 Years
Participant E	Male	Mexican	Yes (UNK)	≤ 10 Years
Participant F	Male	White	Yes (FT)	≥ 10 Years
Participant G	Female	White	Yes (FT)	LWOP
Participant H	Male	Mixed	Yes (FT)	LWOP
Participant I	Female	Mexican	Yes (FT)	LWOP
Participant J	Female	Mexican	No	≤ 10 Years
Participant K	Male	White	Yes (FT)	≥ 10 Years

**Data Collection**

After receiving approval from the university's IRB (approval no. xxxx), the emails were drafted, and flyers were created. I sought to find people who have been previously incarcerated and have gone through and completed CBRP in the state of California. Out of the desired number of participants, 11 participants from varying

backgrounds, criminogenic histories, gender, and race participated in this data collection.

Per the approved research flyer, all participants inquired via phone, text, or email and shared their perceptions and experiences through Zoom interviews. From beginning to end, participants reached out based on the flyers they encountered and connected with me. It was then confirmed that they had participated in a CBRP with the researcher's previous knowledge of CBRPs in California. Once the participants were confirmed, they were sent a link to log into the Zoom meeting, where there was a password that only the participant and I had for this meeting. Once in the meeting, I then reviewed the consent form again, asking for verification that the participant not only received a copy but also understood all aspects of the research. All participants agreed to participate in the research, and the average meeting length was approximately 60 minutes.

All aspects of the research questions were recorded during the meeting through Zoom's automatic recording system. This information was then saved in two places: the vaulted file on my computer and the password-protected cloud file for my database. As almost all aspects were planned during the research collection process, I came across one aspect that was unexpected and difficult to circumnavigate. Throughout the process, with the digitization of research flyers and increase in international scam activity, multiple entities in Lagos, Nigeria were attempting to participate in the research to obtain the \$20 Amazon gift card given at the end of the interview and member-checking process. Although two fake participants made it through the initial vetting process, it became clear within moments of speaking with them in the confidential Zoom meeting that they were not valid participants, so the interviews were canceled. Later, I was able to vet the email



addresses that came through the scheduling portal, stopping the fraudulent participants from scheduling and attempting to take advantage of this research project.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative research involves an interpretive, phenomenological, naturalistic approach to understanding lived experiences through the collection of perspective findings from an individual (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Qualitative analysis is the finite process of taking the information gathered through a reflective process where the collected data are broken down through the process of codes, categories, and themes from raw data to eventually result in findings to each of the research questions posed throughout the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The data analysis for this research began during the interview process. During the initial interviews, transcriptions were completed. After completing the Zoom interviews, I took the recordings from them and replayed them, while transcribing to add missed information and correct or supplement any notes taken during the interview process. The raw data were compiled from these transcripts with the participants and recordings. Next, I reviewed all transcribed data and notes collected throughout the process to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants. Then, for confirmation, I asked all participants to participate in member checking, where the transcripts in their entirety were sent to the participants via email so they could read through the documentation for confirmation of the conversation in its truthfulness and clarity. All participants finalized their member checking and verified the accuracy of the transcript sent to them via email back to me.

Then all raw data were imported to an Excel sheet where I manually coded it. A

systematic coding process was deployed to correctly identify the themes and patterns in the provided qualitative data without multiple conversations across various participants (Gubrium et al., 2008; Williams & Moser, 2019). During the coding process, open coding was used as an initial coding process, consisting of note examination and a prominent information grouping, then axial coding, where the emergent themes were further refined and aligned within the categorization of themes, finally ending with selective coding, where the themes cannot only be documented but also visualized (Williams & Moser, 2019). During this, codes were identified as associated concepts, as noted in correlation to the themes (a) housing, core challenges, stability, and psychological obstacles; (b) socioeconomic obstacles, housing, stability, professional development; and (c) psychological development, positive social engagement and locus of control.

Throughout the coding process, I manually identified three themes. Theme 1 is an extensive need for extended support in post incarceration, where the barriers to time in relation to accessing appropriate and demanding needs of the formerly incarcerated person are taken into consideration. Interviewee C reflected on the lack of familial time and connection stating, “the limited time that we had on release to see our families.” Theme 2 was the foundation of sustainable finances within reentry, where difficulties in maintaining acute financial stability when reintegrating into a community with limited to no support systems were identified. When reflecting on their experience, Interviewee G remarked, “You had to show that you had \$3000 in your savings account before you could graduate.” Theme 3 was internal/external factors of personal growth for those reintegrating into society, distinguished by the social-emotional support systems, both

externally and internally, as they relate to appropriate stable reintegration. Interviewee J echoed stated, “I just need to love myself.” Through these thematic understandings, I was able elaborate on participants’ lived experiences.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is fundamental to assessing the quality of interpretative qualitative research. As such, I needed to be cognizant of their context and data, maintain uniformity and neutrality during data analysis, and provide adequate information to allow for possible study replication and evaluation of its findings concerning other frameworks. The risk of bias and shortcomings within a study can be reduced through the trustworthiness standards that validate the reliability of the study. As the researcher is the main instrument of this research, it was essential to remain aware of any preconceptions, biases, and preceding awareness of the studied phenomena. Throughout this study, the I utilized standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

### **Credibility**

Throughout this research, credibility was used in a variety of ways. Triangulation is used by utilizing the same research questions for all participants, regardless of age, gender, or criminogenic history, and through member checking within the completion and coding process of the Zoom interviews with participants. With the triangulation, I could provide realistic, thick, and rich descriptions of the perceptions of the participants who participated in the Zoom interviews (Conrad et al., 2011; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Member checking allowed me to cross-reference any possibility of researcher bias

through realistic and real-time credibility confirmation of raw data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The use of these noted strategies allowed confirmed credibility not only within the raw data but also in subsequent coding and summarization of research.

### **Transferability**

Transferability in qualitative research refers to one or more researchers' ability to take the current research and data and apply them in another environment. Within this research, transferability may refer to a researcher's ability to use these research questions in different states and their programmatic assistance. Through the research, a researcher's ability to strengthen their topic's transferability to other researchers allows the replicated process to be done in different settings or communities, theoretically finding similar conclusions throughout the research process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Although the thick, rich data for this research was taken from individuals who have participated in and completed community-based reentry programs in California, it can be assumed that this may be an overall perception of lived experience from previously incarcerated persons throughout the US due to mass incarceration, and limited resources.

### **Dependability**

Dependability indicates through the research that the process has been transparent, documented, legal, logical, and traceable (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Throughout this research, I recorded the interviews with participants via Zoom and saved them on an external hard drive. During the interview process, all questions were the same for all participants. While holding the interviews with participants, I took down handwritten notes to recall aspects of the conversation later. After the interviews were

completed, I utilized manual transcription through listening and writing down the entire discussion in a conversation format in Excel. This allowed me to re-review the transcripts and identify codes and themes through manual and consistent coding. Dependability was maintained through my straightforward, consistent, systematic data collection and analysis approach.

### **Confirmability**

The goal of confirmability through research is to recognize and discover ways in which my biases and preconceptions may impact the outcome of the data analysis and overall results of this research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Through the documentation approach taken in this study, I have developed a formulation of confirmability.

Confirmability is verified in this research through documentation, member-checking, and confirmation. I have acknowledged their biases and preconceptions throughout this research. However, this has been mitigated by my ability to pull knowledge and information from the relevant data, thus negating the biases that I may have had by taking a reflexive approach throughout the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

### **Results**

This qualitative, phenomenological study aimed to explore the perceptions of formerly incarcerated persons who are no longer on criminal justice monitoring and have successfully completed community-based reentry programming in California. This study, however, is unique due to the varying times and criminogenic history that all participants noted during their interviews. With a range of crimes and sentences, from drug charges within their local community to capital-level crimes, it became clear that the similarities

outweighed the differences when it came to reentry programming. I sought to identify the gap between the needs of those actively receiving these programmatic functions and the academic recommendations. Through seeking this information from those with lived experiences in the criminal justice system, it is theorized that I would be able to identify the actual needs of formerly incarcerated persons in community-based reentry programming to lead to a successful reintegration back into the community.

The purpose of this research was reiterated in the research questions: What are the perceptions of formerly incarcerated individuals who have gone through and successfully completed reentry programming? What are formerly incarcerated individuals' perceptions of the connection between CBRP and recidivism in the criminal justice system? The goal of this qualitative, phenomenological research is to gain an unknown insight and understanding of the lived phenomenon of these persons in their natural environment. Through a phenomenological approach, qualitative research understands the discovery of a lived experience and how they have experienced it (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

Though this research lent itself to many themes within the data, through the thematic analysis of all collected data, three themes stood to be the most significant concerning the research questions: an extensive need for extended support in post-incarceration, the foundation of sustainable finances within reentry, and internal/external factors of personal growth for those reintegrating into society.

**Table 2***Thematic Descriptions and Commonalities*

Theme	Description	Supporting Quotes	Frequency	Associated Concepts
Theme 1: An Extensive Need for Extended Support in Post-Incarceration	Time barriers in relation to accessing appropriate and demanding needs of the formerly incarcerated persons.	“...the limited time that we had on release to see our families...” “...that period of time where you can kind of like get your life Together”	8	Housing, Core challenges, Stability, Justice based expectations, psychological obstacles,
Theme 2: The Foundation of Sustainable Finances within Reentry	Difficulties maintaining acute financial stability when reintegrating into a community with limited to no support systems.	“...you had to show, that you had \$3000 in your savings account before you could graduate...” “Not having a job, not knowing exactly where I am going to end up. What am I going to do with myself?”	6	Socioeconomic Obstacles, Housing, Stability, Professional Development
Theme 3: Internal/External Factors of Personal Growth for those reintegrating into society	Social-emotional support systems, both externally and internally, as they relate to appropriate and stable reintegration.	“I just need to love myself...” “I have made a promise to myself, to God, my mom to everybody that I will never do drugs again...”	11	Psychological Development, Positive Social Engagement, Locus of Control

### **Theme 1: An Extensive Need for Extended Support in Post-Incarceration**

All 11 ( $N=11$ ) participants participated in an interview wherein they answered questions related to participating in community-based reentry programming and their successful completion in California post-incarceration. All participants stated their understanding of programming and the rules behind them. However, all participants echoed the sentiment that time is essential when reintegrating into the community. Between housing, documentation, and job or school placement, the participants showcased an understanding confirmed by researchers about the insecurities and difficulties that one may have while reintegrating back into the community and the effect that those issues could have on a person's outlook (Reece & Link, 2023). Graves and Fredrich (2024) note that regardless of time spent in prison, many of the psychological and physiological needs of people go unaddressed while incarcerated, leading to a furtherment of need in post-incarceration.

Meanwhile, this programmatic orientation abandons the idea that previous life experiences can and will affect the outcome of a person's present-focused community-based reentry treatment (Hyde et al., 2020). Therefore, allowing for extended time based on the needs of the participant, instead of an umbrella timeframe, is essential to reducing the possibility of recidivism, homelessness, or joblessness for formerly incarcerated persons. A sentiment which was supported by a comment by Interviewee A:

And its, it's not easy to do in that small time frame because that amount of time is crucial, ya know? And A lot of people, especially like, if you're coming from a



long period of time in custody, versus coming from the streets, it's different. Do you understand? It's different?

Similarly, Interviewee F remarked:

I believe that, once that six months is done if you, if you didn't get your start and you are not standing on your feet. They are done with you, they drop you off at the edge of the street, and they tell you that your time is done; adios, good luck.

Interviewee G expressed the difficulties that they experienced and saw others experience with the step system in programs, wherein if you do not complete one step in its entirety, then you are unable to complete the following necessary steps as well:

but if you denied the access all this time, now you are punishing them because they have been in the program for 5-8 months, and they don't have a job yet. Well, you wouldn't let them work because you have to do all these things before they let you work.

Interviewee G also expressed their understanding of familial support and compared their experience to their peers who did not have social support, justifying its importance by stating, "Because it gives you that period of time where you can kind of like get your life together, to some degree, and for me, it was having a place to stay while I was looking for work." Interviewee C recalled this being a significant challenge for their time management:

Yeah, the limited time that we had on release to see our families, not being able to go out and get a job right away. Not having somebody on board, like the president of the program, to talk to about anxiety about being out. I mean just, the feeling-

the feeling of um., being overwhelmed was just, was a lot at times.

Like other participants, Interviewee I believed that they would have had an easier time if they had known about and had access to the California Department of Rehabilitation resources during their mandated community-based reentry programming, citing:

they knew all these things, and if I found out anything, it was because one of them told me oh well, you can go here, I didn't know about the DOR, which is the, uh, uh, Department of Rehabilitation for formerly Incarcerated. So, they have all these things that help you get clothing for when you find a job, getting clothing for the job that you have. They give you vouchers; they give vouchers for transportation for food- they help you with housing. They have programs that will pay first and last month's rent for you. I didn't know any of that.

Barrenger et al. (2021) note the importance of these sentiments and the necessity of an array of treatments and timelines with differing populations to specify what treatments work and for whom, allowing participants more individualized reentry program options.

## **Theme 2: The Foundation of Sustainable Finances within Reentry**

Participants in community-based reentry programs may come from various backgrounds, including but not limited to long-term offenses. This means that those who are being released from incarceration may have spent, on average, around 20-30 years in prison before being released. For many, it appears that this is from an early age.

However, that is only sometimes the case for some. Taking into consideration that a vast majority of the Life Without the Possibility of Parole (LWOP) population were arrested

at an early age, it can be assumed that the life skills that an individual would learn outside of prison are not learned, taught or viewed in a prison setting as they would be in a community-based setting. Espinosa (2024) echoes skillsets that those who are older when released from prison may be missing functional and purposeful skills, such as shopping, money management, cooking, and even more recently, over the last two decades, technological education. These factors may lead to increased disconnection from community and society and eventual recidivation for those with no basis for additional social support.

Though many people experience reintegration back into the community on the most basic of levels, the inability to maintain suitable life skills after incarceration can continue to directly impact a person's ability to maintain stable housing, income, social support, and physical and psychological services for years to come (Harding et al., 2014; Hyde et al., 2020; Martin, 2018; Soloman et al., 2001; Visher & Travis, 2003).

Participants provided similar reactions when participating in this interview process.

Interviewee C reiterated this sentiment: "Not having a job, not knowing exactly where I am going to end up. What am I going to do with myself? Those things are challenging."

Interviewee D shared their difficulties with creating the foundation for stability due to the 30% cut that her transitional housing would take from her minimum wage paycheck and stated, "Many people can't get out of transitional homes because if they work two jobs or three, they want 30% out of each one of those checks." Interviewee G shared the same frustrations with learning money management when organizations are attempting to take a large chunk of money, sharing "I wasn't willing to give them my money, you had to

show, that you had \$3000 in your savings account before you could graduate.”

Interviewee J shared a similar sentiment of difficulty:

You can't have a phone, and you are trying to get sober at home, but you have to pay rent, you have to pay for your food right, and that, that will - if you don't have like a job right, and a family that is willing to work with you, you you're going to fall back you are going to fall right back into that cycle and the pressures of the real world and possibly just relapse again. Ya know? It is a vicious cycle.

The shared experience showcased how important money can be to an individual's ability to reintegrate successfully into the community. Having an organization take a large chunk of financial compensation on top of federal funding allocated to the organizations seemingly leaves these individuals with not only less money than they would have but also an inability to properly save and identify what housing and other social services they may be able to apply for based on employment and salary.

### **Theme 3: Internal/External Factors of Personal Growth for Those Reintegrating into Society**

All 11 participants identified that a primary reason that they had not recidivated back into the criminal justice system, regardless of how long they had been released, was due to the self-awareness and internal work that they did for themselves. Some participants related it to their ability to give back to the community they were once a part of, with insight for other individuals in the same position they were once in. In contrast, others reflected that they do not enjoy participating in the criminal justice system. Many participants reflected on their experiences with peers, noting the sentiment from Hyde et

al. (2020) that peers within these programs served as reminders of where an individual has been, currently is, and where they could go either positively or negatively. The sharing of strategies from participant to participant and the social collaboration between those within the same housing systems presented a sort of provisional external social support system that may otherwise not have been recognized if individuals were not released into community-based reentry programming (Barrenger et al., 2019; Hyde et al., 2020).

Interviewee J shared personal insight into both external and internal factors of their life, leading them to personal growth and mitigating their chance of recidivism while in community-based reentry programming. Specifically, Interviewee J stated:

I felt so unloved by the world at first I was just like; at first I hated myself, and then one day I was just like I just need to love myself. And I began this journey of loving myself, learning to love myself. And what is love, and to this day, I am like, what is love, and I still feel like I don't understand love. I understand it a little bit better today because I love my son. And that's when I started realizing, like, if I love myself, I wouldn't put myself in situations that can physically, mentally, or emotionally harm me, like being under the influence. Like hanging out with people I don't know, and I do know what they do.

Meanwhile, Interviewee K shared a religious factor in remarking “But that’s a big part of it, and the other part is that I have made a promise to myself, to God, my mom to everybody that I will never do drugs again.”

Finally, Interviewee B illuminated the phrase echoed throughout the interview

process in various ways, but by every participant stating, “I just kinda started realizing that there is better, I am creating this for myself, I can build better. I can have better.” Thus, it is showcasing that both the internal and external factors of peer support and familial support, as well as internal factors of self-reflection, psychological reflection, therapy, and more, also factor into reducing recidivism.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the perceptions of lived experiences of previously incarcerated persons who are no longer under criminal justice monitoring and have successfully completed community-based reentry programming in California. Additionally, this research focused on determining the best programmatic foundation or development to create the most effective services for community-based reentry programs. The discoveries from these semi-structured interviews conducted with 11 formerly incarcerated individuals addressed the research questions of what the perceptions are of formerly incarcerated individuals who have gone through and successfully completed reentry programming and what their perceptions of the connection between CBRP and recidivism into the criminal justice system are. All participant-related demographics, data collection, subsequent analysis, and the validity and trustworthiness of this research have all been aptly addressed in the findings throughout.

The data completion of three significant themes from the structured interviews held with the 11 participants: Theme 1: An Extensive Need for Extended Support in Post-incarceration, Theme 2: The Foundation of Sustainable Finances within Reentry, and

Theme 3: Internal/External Factors of Personal Growth for Those Reintegrating into Society. With the completion of Chapter Five, there will be a conclusion alongside an interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations by me, and implications for potential positive social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendation

This qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted to explore the experiences of previously incarcerated persons and what they believe they require due to their lived experience to actively and stably reintegrate into the community after being released from incarceration, only after they have gone through and completed CBRP. Furthermore, I sought to identify a better foundation to create the most effective services for CBRPs. I explored the thoughts of previously incarcerated persons, with a variety of demographics and criminogenic histories, regarding their lived experience of participating either willingly or unwillingly in CBRP post-release from incarceration and the successes and challenges they had with that.

The participants identified ways that CBRPs assisted and debilitated their ability to reintegrate into their communities or communities where they were placed. Throughout this study, they identified successes and challenges they had while participating in these programs and after. Moreover, the participants shared their personal experiences in these programs and their actual needs post-incarceration versus what they were being addressed as their needs. Participants showcased an understanding of their successes and challenges outside of the program and how the programs they participated in could have led to better outcomes had they been participant-focused. They also addressed the expectations placed on them by the criminal justice system even after release from incarceration and programming.

All participants are placed in these programs under the information that is provided in actuarial assessments like the LS/CMI assessment and the Static and Stable



assessment for people who have sexual offenses. Not only do these assessments not consider men and women, but they do not consider the individual life experience leading to their sentenced crime, nor any other relevant factors such as direct abuse or co-defendants, as well as general demographic information (Giguère et al., 2021). However, through CBRPs, individuals are often given the key to their freedom, regardless of considerable factors in their history.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

This qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted to answer the research questions by exploring the lived experiences of formerly incarcerated persons who have completed reentry programs in California and how their lived experiences in these programs have impacted their perceptions of CBRP as well as any relation that it may have had with recidivism as well. I explored the perceptions of experiences of formerly incarcerated persons and what they desired in their programming versus what they received in their CBRP. Three themes were recognized in the study:

- An extensive need for extended support in post-incarceration
- The foundation of sustainable finances within reentry
- Internal/external factors of personal growth for those reintegrating into society

All themes discovered within this study directly relate to the perceptions of formerly incarcerated persons' beliefs to successfully reintegrate into the community, specifically regarding the need for time, stability, personal development, and growth.

All 11 participants, during one point in their reintegration into society, made a conscious effort, as noted in the interviews, that they no longer wanted to participate in

criminogenic behaviors, have friends with criminogenic backgrounds, or use illicit substances. All participants noted that they made a concerted effort to disengage from the same behaviors that led them to incarceration in the first place, regardless of the crime they had been sentenced for. This supports prior research related to social obstacles and the need for positive social engagement, wherein not all participants may have had a positive social engagement in their housing facilities, but they all related a sentiment of further seeking positive engagement for successful reentry, whether with family or friends (Barrick et al., 2014; Taylor, 2016; Wallace et al., 2016). Robust social, psychological, physiological, and socioeconomic supporting programs may offer genuine wrap-around services for mentorship and community reintegration for formerly incarcerated persons, regardless of their crime or sentence.

The data collected and analyzed in this study from the participants affirms the suggestions mentioned that actuarial justice, often used to determine the placement and services an individual is given both while incarcerated and post-incarceration, is based more on the public outcry than on the actual crime or penal code itself. Data from this study support this theoretical foundation, showcasing that, regardless of the crime committed (i.e., murder, sex offenses, drug charges), these participants were all given similar reentry programs, which follow a specific set of state and federal guidelines due to their funding sources. This leads to the understanding that the criminogenic history of a person's past may be numerical in value as, regardless of the crime, the expectations of an individual are the same, showcasing the second of the characteristics of actuarial justice risk-based profiles, rather than individualized treatment or care, in which the

fragmented identity of an individual is institutionalized instead of truly personalized (Bosworth, 2021; Robert, 2010). Currently, in CBRP in California, all participants, regardless of their crime, are given the exact expectations regarding their time in programming, 6 months, their expectations in programming, including classes and documentation gathering (i.e., driver's license, social security card, etc.). Interviewee F, who was incarcerated for "Exactly ten years," and Interviewee I, who was incarcerated for "24, almost 25 years," had the exact expectations, limitations, and requirements when released from incarceration.

### **Insights from the Data Analysis**

#### ***Insights from An Extensive Need for Extended Support in Post-incarceration***

All participants shared that they feel a need for extended support post-incarceration, whether it be direct care needs like job placement or indirect needs like continued time in CBRPs; all participants agreed that 90 days in programming was not enough for either themselves or their peers. Interviewee H suggested that the lack of time led to more stress and difficulty finding the ability to complete all of the required work, alongside the personal work they were attempting to finish to reintegrate into the community successfully. Other participants noted similar experiences for peers. Interviewee J noted that just because people were in the program did not mean everybody was ready to be in it. Meanwhile, Interviewee C shared that there was limited time to see families, leading to an inability to gain immediate employment. This shows the difficulty individuals may have not only in getting the necessary documentation but also housing, job placement, and social reintegration for successful long-term reintegration back into

the community, both taking into consideration the timeframe of only 90 days, regardless of incarceration sentence, as well as mandatory tasks required by parole or probation upon direct release.

*Insights from The Foundation of Sustainable Finances within Reentry*

The need for foundational socioeconomic stability within reentry and reentry programs should be more noticed and unquestioned. Participants shared views regarding their inability to achieve socioeconomic independence after incarceration and the exacerbation of these issues after being forced into a CBRP per the mandates of the criminal justice system. One participant noted that the CBRP they were in wanted 30% of their paycheck, for which they had already made minimum wage. Unable to save and unable to pay their mandated fines often lead to issues, such as being able to obtain licensure, as Interviewee A noted during their interview. This leads to a cycle where although participants may be making money, they are often making already small, minimum wage-based amounts, where they may have to pay out a total of 50% or more to not only housing, which is already funded on a state level but also mandatory fines, leaving a cyclical system. Within the cyclical system, participants may find it challenging to save money due to the lack of funds they have, obtain stable housing due to the inability to forfeit 3 months' rent when signing a lease in a viable location (often based on the individual's criminogenic history) as well as the inability to continue working, if they are unable to pay for transportation; whether an insured, car with a proper license, ride share or bus fare.

The predominant insight from the foundation of sustainable finances within

reentry appears directly linked to the housing, or CBRP, where the participant is placed. Those who noted being placed in programming where they had large sums of money taken from them for housing purposes appeared to have slower rates of reintegration into the community, lived in lower-income areas, and had at least one documented experience of recidivism within their lifetime. Therefore, the need for financial stability is overarching for complete and finite dependence when reintegrating into the community. The ability to maintain financial stability may not ever equate to financial freedom. However, the ability to maintain employment, housing, positive social interactions, mental and physical healthcare, and more appear to directly impact one's ability to obtain and maintain financial stability in reentry.

***Insights from Internal/External Factors of Personal Growth for Those Reintegrating into Society***

Community-Based Reentry Programming is created in a variety of ways. Some individuals participate in programming specific to their crime, while others are placed in programming specific to substance use disorders. Though many of these persons may be placed in programming that fits their needs, it appears that this is not what typically occurs. Numerous participants noted that they were placed in programming that had the availability, although it may not have applied to them. At least 30% of the participants noted that they were placed in programming wherein there was a focus on substance use disorders. In contrast, they did not have substance use disorders post-incarceration. Because of this, all (100%) participants noted that they learned to focus on themselves in various ways.

The use of both external and internal factors for personal growth as it relates to reintegrating into the community was shown consistently regardless of criminogenic background or history and often noted that external factors were either positive social interactions, such as familial reunification, or religious communities. At the same time, internal factors were the self-reflection and realization of an undesirable lifestyle if they were re-incarcerated. Almost all participants in this study noted that they are giving back to their communities in some fashion, either by providing care and services for people recently released from incarceration, the unhoused, or at-risk youth. All of these showcase the desire to change the lives of others, thus leading to another external factor of positive social engagement within the community on a macro level.

### **Findings in the Body of Literature**

#### ***General Findings in the Literature***

Though there is a significant gap in the literature for the specifics of this study, there are essential factors that can still be taken into consideration within the findings of the literature, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2. Even with limited research regarding successes for people who have completed community-based reentry programming, there are aspects of reintegration that research shows as ongoing obstacles for individuals reintegrating into the community, regardless of community programming.

Formerly incarcerated persons present with the difficulties of finding stable employment, housing, career placement, school success, and much more, often directly related to their income and criminogenic history. The relationship between CBRPs and their participants during the 90 days that they are given to successfully graduate from

these programs and positively reintegrate into the community appears not to be enough time for most.

***Findings in An Extensive Need for Extended Support in Post-incarceration***

Extending support services individually for participants in CBRPs helps individuals meet and exceed their needs. Programs are built on the belief that one program fits all persons, which is not the case. This study shows the importance of time, especially for individuals who had been given life sentences or long-term sentences and were released. Interviewee A shared that they only have 90 days to gain everything they need to be successful at reintegrating. Interviewee A also stated that this means photo identification, a social security card, medical insurance, food stamps, and housing. Noting that even for those who have not been incarcerated, obtaining these things can come with its own set of difficulties, as these locations are not always easily accessible and require financial support. Many of this study's participants repeated these sentiments. Interviewee G transparently shared, "You have to do all these things before they let you work," when discussing the difficulties of ensuring they have everything and employment within 90 days. As being released into the community brings a newfound responsibility for many, sometimes after over two decades of being in an organized institution, the transition from uniformity to freedom can lead many to immense stress, anxiety, and other physiological issues. When released, aspects of their life that they once had no control over are now solely in their hands, with no direction, such as following up with medical appointments and navigating the technological advancements made in their absence.

The research is minimal regarding how much time a person may need to reintegrate into the community aptly. Therefore, this study recommends changes for participants in short-term and long-term fashions. However, within the research, it is noted that the severity of access to constant and regular community support and needs for emotional, physical, and imperative housing affect over 90% of those who are previously incarcerated in various stages of reintegration into the community (Fahmy, 2021; Nelson et al., 1999; Pettus-Davis et al., 2017). This study showcases that more research is needed on the specific needs of those reintegrating into the community and the length of time to do so successfully.

#### ***Findings in The Foundation of Sustainable Finances within Reentry***

The need for foundational financial stability for participants reintegrating into the community is complex. They showcased a systemic issue beyond reintegration into the criminal justice system. Individuals who are physically released from incarceration are not always monetarily released from incarceration. Many times, incarceration comes with restitution to communities, cities, and often victims or families of the victims. This study makes it apparent that getting from behind a debt wall after incarceration can be challenging and unrealistic for individuals attempting to restart their lives. Interviewee A shared the inability to obtain a license after more than 40 years due to the number of fines that they must pay and the accrued interest on those fines. Due to not having stable employment when incarcerated, this individual was unable to continue to make regular payments and, instead, multiplied their debt, leading them to continue to be unable to obtain a driver's license when released from prison. Meanwhile, Interviewee J shared



their difficulties, getting out of the cycle due to inconsistent sustainable financial stability, stating, “I lost my financial aid, so I have been unemployed since January of this year.”

This study repeats the evidence shared by Visser and Lattimore (2007), wherein more than half of the studied population noted a direct need for food, shelter, clothing, and financial assistance, all leading directly back to the stability of finances. The comparison in the 2007 study showed that financial assistance was one of the most requested community needs. Per this study, it still is for those being released from incarceration. The foundation for this financial need comes in the form of financial literacy, which was reported in this study by multiple participants as a direct need of assistance when learning how to navigate the new expectations of their release better (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2021).

***Findings in Internal/External Factors of Personal Growth for Those Reintegrating into Society.***

Overall, this study identified the importance of not only external positive social engagement but also internal positive psychological engagement. Those who reintegrate back into the community through CBRPs are often forced into social interactions through their living environment. For example, Interviewee C shared an external example, stating that they work as a substance use and abuse counselor with high school-age students, sharing how these programs help them remain aligned within the community and engaged in their reintegration. Otherwise, internal factors were shared by Interviewee I, who shared:

I did a lot of work, working on the person that went to prison. I didn't just do one or two; I mean, I did years, along with the therapy, years of therapy. Because I came to realize that you can't and you won't fix something that is broken if you don't know it. So it took a lot of hard work in groups and therapy that for me, change is real and it is achievable, and I had to realize that I was worth saving.

Multiple participants shared this same ideal, the idea that it took work. Research, though limited in terms of the relation to those who have completed CBRP and are no longer on criminal justice monitoring- shows that those who have been released from incarceration are in greater need of psychological assistance due to the barriers to reintegration that they face (Galletta et al., 2021). The independent psychological barriers these participants face in comparison to their unincarcerated counterparts will lead to more extended independent psychological needs and sociological needs, which are entangled within one another.

Any emotional ineptitude caused by a lack of internal work or personal growth will suggestively correlate to one's ability to maintain beneficial external support from family, community members, friends, and even possibly coworkers (Fahmy, 2021). The research shows that those who have these positive, external personal growth moments of social change will lead to an elongated benefit for some through a decrease in commonly connected deviant behaviors, such as drugs, alcohol, and gang affiliations (Mowen et al., 2019).

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study's limitations were time constraints and the reliability of data. The

study only covered the formerly incarcerated participants' specific time in community-based reentry programming. Therefore, I did not consider a large variety before and after CBRP. The reliability of the first-hand data was a limitation due to the history of some of the participants. Taking into consideration their personal and lived experiences, some participants have a long criminogenic history, as well as a long history of documented and self-reported deviant behavior, including long-term use of mind-altering substances. Another limitation was geographic location. The geographical location could be considered a drawback due to its focus on California. As California is one of the most populated states in the nation, it can be assumed that other CBRPs and their participants may have had different experiences, resources, or programming altogether. The final limitation of this study came from my bias. Over the years, I have worked with various CBRPs nationwide. Although not currently employed to work with this population, my experiences could have made it difficult to collect all data while mitigating bias. I utilized member checking followed by a systematic approach to manual data analysis to suspend all bias and preconceptions and alleviate limitations.

### **Recommendations**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the perceptions of lived experiences of previously incarcerated persons who are no longer under criminal justice monitoring and have successfully completed community-based reentry programming in California. This study also explores difficulties identified by the participants who experienced these programs first-hand. Much like other qualitative, phenomenological studies, it was found that although these situations, experiences, and

criminogenic histories are unique to their holders and speakers, they are not solely unique to the shared experiences of formerly incarcerated persons.

The findings in this study further showcase the need for continued literature and research regarding the lived experiences and perceptions of people who had actively received programming and participated in these systems. The findings endorse the need for additional support for previously incarcerated persons through the use of time, direct services, and indirect resources. The findings further support using individualistic treatment options for participants in CBRPs and internal/external supportive systems or access to these systems where positive self-work can be completed.

Therefore, I recommend further research on the perceptions of previously incarcerated persons currently in community-based reentry programming and how implementing these findings may lead to more supportive services for individuals reintegrating into the community.

### **Implications**

This study delivers an understanding of the nuanced experiences of formerly incarcerated persons who are no longer in criminal justice monitoring and what their experiences during and after CBRP have been. All participants, regardless of criminogenic background, shared that, upon release from incarceration, they were mandated to participate in a CBRP. It was reiterated numerous times throughout interviews that participants would attempt to reach out to numerous programs, only to be told there was no availability and forced into a program that may not have met their needs nor created a safe and stable environment for them to reintegrate. Many participants

shared their social, physiological, psychological, and socioeconomic obstacles while in programming and after. The data can help create information programmatic shifts for long-term program restructures, thus improving programmatic change and programs that assist the formerly incarcerated with individualistic needs, meeting participants where they are at their release.

The goal of positive social change from this study is to set the foundational groundwork to create an ongoing dialogue among criminal justice professionals, lobbyists, policymakers, and programmatic leads. Through this dialogue, fundamental creation can be made into identifying the actual needs of participants, to not only keep them out of prison but also create more significant, more thorough wrap-around programs in which the use and need of those as mentioned earlier internal/external factors for personal growth may be continued. Through these discussions and changes, CBRPs will be able to create more educational resources, and criminal justice professionals will be able to create realistic expectations for the recently released going into these programs. The data have identified the importance of housing, which programs maintain within the programmatic structure but also give way to supplementary programmatic needs for reducing recidivism and positive, long-term community reintegration.

### **Conclusion**

A qualitative, phenomenological research approach was identified and used for this study to explore and understand the lived experiences and perceptions of formerly incarcerated individuals who have successfully completed CBRP and are no longer on any form of criminal justice monitoring. Specifically, the study looked into the

perceptions of these people, identifying what they were given for programmatic assistance during their 90 days post-incarceration versus what they believed they needed during that time and beyond and how actuarial justice relates to the reality of lived experience and perceptions. The study also explored the perceptions of the difficulties of reintegration from incarceration to community-based programming and then into the community directly regarding various obstacles.

All responses from participants allowed me to cultivate a better understanding of the description of the phenomenological experiences, assessing the understanding of “how” and “why” these experiences have either directly or indirectly shaped the participant’s ability to reintegrate back into the community successfully. Though many factors affect the outcome of somebody’s successful reintegration back into society, the necessity of understanding how they are all interconnected can change the outcome of an individual’s life. Utilizing a more individualistic approach instead of an actuarial justice-based approach can lead to reforming CBRPs. Using formulated risk profiles, it can be assumed that actuarial justice indicates that those with long-term convictions and sentences would be less likely to succeed in CBRPs. However, this research shows that with the proper navigation, this is not the case. CBRPs are critical for many and highly sought after by many more. Direct community-based engagement and support for all individuals returning to society, regardless of their time incarcerated, can transform lives and save them.

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## Appendix: Interview Questions

### **Demographics and Background:**

1. How do you describe your gender?
2. How do you describe your race or ethnicity?
3. What is your highest level of formal education?
4. What is your marital status?
5. What is your parental status?
6. Have you successfully completed community-based reentry programming?
  - a. When?
7. How old were you when you were first arrested? And what was the offense?
8. How were you employed before you were incarcerated?
9. How are you employed now?

### **Research Related Questions:**

1. How long were you incarcerated ~~for~~, before being released?
2. Please describe your first 30 days after being released from incarceration.
3. How long have you been off of criminal justice monitoring?
4. What made you choose Community Based Reentry Programming to transition into?
5. What are your perceptions of your experience in Community Based Reentry Programming?
6. How do you perceive the connection between Community Based Reentry Programming and recidivism into the criminal justice system?

7. Please describe the successes that you had while in Community Based Reentry Programming.
8. Please describe the challenges that you had while in Community Based Reentry Programming.
9. Has your perception of reentering the community changed since being released and completing criminal justice monitoring?
10. Since your departure from the criminal justice system, what has been your experience in receiving community-based services and support?
11. What do you believe is the reason you have not recidivated, while other have?