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Career Outcomes for Formerly Incarcerated College Graduates

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CAREER OUTCOMES FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED COLLEGE
GRADUATES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Roberta Fox
Jesse Rodriguez
May 2022

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ABSTRACT

The California State University (CSU) Project Rebound is a reentry program that provides educational, social, financial, and case management to formerly incarcerated college students (FICS) with the goal of helping them become successful post-incarceration and post-graduation. However, there is a penury of research on how Project Rebound actually helped FICS create pro-social bonds and develop career preparation competencies. This exploratory study is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature by looking at the outcomes of formerly incarcerated college graduates who participated in a CSU-sponsored reentry program. In this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 alumni of a specific Project Rebound program (N = 13). Results from thematic analysis revealed five major themes. First, there is a broad range of support that constitutes the career-building network of formerly incarcerated college students. Second, respondents report a 'mixed bag' in terms of career seeking experiences post-graduation. Third, despite progress, a lot remains to be seen in terms of reintegrating formerly incarcerated college graduates into the workplace. Fourth, deficiencies exist within the broad range of support necessary for increased career outcomes. Fifth, graduates who were proactive in regard to career building strategies reported more positive career seeking experiences and increased job satisfaction. Implications of the findings for theory, research, social work practice, and policy are discussed.

Keywords: FICGs, reentry programs, Project Rebound, qualitative data

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Roberta Fox, MSW

I would like to thank the MSW program for providing with the tools and knowledge to succeed in my academic journey. I would also like to thank my research partner for the tremendous support and help with the research. Finally, I would like to thank my family for being supportive throughout my academic journey.

Jesse Rodriguez, MSW

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to each student who chooses to pursue education amid adversity. You have come so far on your journey; never let anything stand in the way of your dreams.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Formulation

Throughout the past 40 years, the United States has led the world in incarceration rates, far surpassing nations that have similar rates of violent crime (Widra & Herring, 2021). In the era of mass incarceration, more Americans have criminal records now than ever before. As of March 2021, 78.8 million American citizens had criminal records (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2021), indicating that approximately 37 percent of American adults are impacted by the criminal justice system. Americans who have been previously incarcerated are subjected to a multitude of socioeconomic barriers upon reentry. The American Bar Association compiled a collection of the 45,000 state and federally imposed “collateral consequences” that formerly incarcerated individuals may face upon reentry (Mitchell, 2015). The term “collateral consequences” is used to describe formal and informal sanctions that endure a lifetime following incarceration (Stafford, 2006). Subsequently, formerly incarcerated individuals are faced with barriers to housing, education, employment, licensure, public assistance, substance abuse, and access to physical and mental health services (Duwe & Clark, 2014; Pager et al., 2009; Runell, 2017).

The unemployment rate among formerly incarcerated individuals who were actively looking for work was 27 percent in 2018, much higher than the national rate of 3.9 percent that same year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

Each year, 630,000 individuals are returning home and studies have shown that 60 percent of them will not be able to secure employment within the first year of reentry (Society for Human Resource Management, 2012). Research shows that unemployment is the number one indicator of re-arrest or re-incarceration, a term referred to as recidivism (Lockwood et al., 2016). Policy makers have recognized this trend since the late 19th century and have been implementing reintegration strategies that include skill-based training and/or academic programs, often offered in penal institutions (Coppedge & Strong, 2013).

The issue of unemployment among the formerly incarcerated population is more severe for communities of color. African Americans are incarcerated at a rate of 5.1 times that of white Americans, while Latinos are incarcerated at 1.4 times the rate of whites in America (Nellis, 2016). Due to disproportionately higher rates of incarceration among minority populations, African Americans and Latinos are frequently subjected to employment discrimination based on criminal convictions. African American men who have been formerly incarcerated experience an unemployment rate of 35.2 percent, while formerly incarcerated African American women fare worse, with an unemployment rate of 43.6 percent (Couloute & Kopf, 2018).

Vocational training and/or career technical education (CTE) has been utilized to prepare inmates for employment after reentry in the U.S. These types of programs are designed to increase skills and knowledge to perform a specific occupational function or trade (Tesfai, 2014). During the early 20th century,

inmates worked in agricultural industrial institutions where they labored for the private industry to offset the cost of institutional overhead (Coppedge & Strong, 2013). By 1936, institutions began to offer opportunities for apprenticeship programs in occupations such as carpentry, plumbing, and automotive repair, whereas women in federal prisons were encouraged to train in stenography, typewriting, and nursing (Coppedge & Strong, 2013).

Beginning in the 1960s, state prisons began to incorporate tertiary education programs into their reformatory initiatives (Coppedge & Strong, 2013). In 1972, federal Pell grants were available to qualifying incarcerated students (Education Amendments, 1972); however, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 created a “Pell ban” that endured for 26 years (Cantora et al., 2020). In 2015, President Obama initiated the Second Chance Pell Program, which allowed incarcerated students in up to 67 institutions to receive federal funds for post-secondary education again--a program which has been extended into the 2022-2023 award year (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Within the past five years, the population of college students with some criminal history has skyrocketed (Silbert & Mukamal, 2020). This is due, in part, to increased accessibility to educational programs in institutions (Duwe & Clark, 2014; Pelettier & Evans, 2019; Scott, 2016), the lift on the Pell ban for currently incarcerated individuals (Mangen, 2021), and campus-based reentry programs aimed at softening the transition from institutions to campuses (Anderson et al., 2018; Murillo, 2021).

Purpose and Rationale of this Study

The purpose of this study was to aid in the identification of reentry strategies which further successful career attainment among formerly incarcerated college graduates (FICG). This study utilized a qualitative approach to explore the post-graduation employment experiences of participants of a campus-based reentry program. Policymakers have encouraged secondary and tertiary education as a cornerstone of successful reentry and as a main deterrent of recidivism (Cantora et al., 2020), which accrues exponential socioeconomic costs (Graves & Rose, 2017). As a measure of the fiscal costs of incarceration in 2018, analysts reported that the Federal Bureau of Prisons spent \$5.8 billion to house inmates in federal penitentiaries, with an average inmate cost of \$36,299 per year (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2019). California spent an average of \$81,209 per inmate in prisons throughout the state during the 2018-2019 fiscal year (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2019). The County of San Bernardino spent \$231 million on incarceration costs between 2015 and 2016, which accounted for 8 percent of its total county budget (Graves & Rose, 2017).

While extensive research has been conducted on the positive effects of education on recidivism rates in the U.S. (Cantora et al., 2020, Davis et al., 2013), little information has been gathered regarding the overall career outcomes for FICG. FICG must deal with a multitude of issues when entering the competitive labor market such as limited social capital, limited technical skills, gaps in professional experience, underemployment, and intersectional

discrimination in addition to legal status. Although education is viewed as a conduit to employment among the formerly incarcerated population, a recent study has found that college graduates with no criminal records receive 50 percent more positive callbacks from employers than do college graduates with criminal records (Cerdeira-Jara et al., 2020). Identifying and promoting career building strategies among FICG will help alleviate the socioeconomic strain of mass incarceration and recidivism. Moreover, assisting formerly incarcerated college students with career development strategies can enhance individual and community well-being among this marginalized population.

Significance of the Study for Social Work Practice

Americans who are directly involved in the criminal justice system are disproportionately representative of many of the issues that social workers have historically addressed. For instance, although 49 percent of former inmates reported working prior to incarceration, 57 percent of men and 72 percent of women surveyed reported living in poverty prior to incarceration (Rabuy & Koph, 2015). In one study, incarcerated individuals reported an annual median income prior to incarceration of only \$6,250 (Looney & Turner, 2018). Individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system are also more likely to have grown up in impoverished homes, within communities with high unemployment rates, and are 2 times more likely to come from single family homes (Looney & Turner, 2018). Researchers analyzing the “foster care to prison pipeline” report that 90 percent of foster youth will become involved with the criminal justice system before aging

out of foster care (Yamat, 2020). As much as 85 percent of the incarcerated population report having some history of substance use, with 65 percent meeting criteria for SUD (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020). Data indicates that 50 percent of the nation's incarcerated population are afflicted with mental illness, with 10-25 percent meeting criteria for conditions which cause significant impairment (Collier, 2014).

Social workers are in a unique position to provide reentry services to the formerly incarcerated population. Social work has always promoted advocacy for oppressed and marginalized populations. Individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system have experienced trauma relating to pre-carceral life stressors, as well as institutionalization. Individuals who are reentering society must often return to living situations that are incongruent with successful reentry. Intersectional identities and social status also contribute to decreased opportunities and/or social capital, which can negate students' academic achievement.

Following graduation, FICG continue to face barriers to employment and licensure, even after obtaining college degrees and avoiding recidivism for extensive lengths of time. Social workers who provide services to students upon reentry should be aware of the multifaceted challenges and protective factors that affect career outcomes for this population. This study will answer the following three related questions:

- 1) What are the employment-seeking experiences of formerly incarcerated college graduates who participated in a campus-based reentry program in Southern California?
- 2) What are effective employment-building sources for formerly incarcerated college graduates?
- 3) From a recipient perspective, how beneficial are a campus-based reentry program's career-building services?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter consists of an analysis of the literature discussing challenges and barriers faced among FICG including unemployment, recidivism, racial and gender disparities, education level, and underemployment. This chapter will discuss the impact of education on criminal desistance and career development. This chapter will also present a background on reentry services provided in a university setting. The final subsection of this chapter will apply a theoretical perspective by examining the ecological systems theory which will allow conceptualization of the issue.

Unemployment among the Formerly Incarcerated

The most influential factor on the incidence of recidivism is unemployment (Lockwood et al., 2016). Unemployment among the formerly incarcerated population is due to employers' perception of the risks of repetition combined with legal stigma that assigns formerly incarcerated individuals "negative credentials" which endure a lifetime. (Pager, 2003; Sugie et al., 2019). Racial disparities create further inequities in employment among the formerly incarcerated population. Researchers found that white ex-offenders are more likely to receive positive job outcomes (17.2%) than African American males with no criminal history (15.2%) (Pager et al., 2009).

Underemployment

Obtaining better employment prospects is the main purpose of pursuing higher education. In a National Gallup Poll administered among college freshman, 88 percent of respondents reported that getting a better job was the reason they were attending college (Strada Education Network & Gallup, 2017), yet the research shows that college graduates are instead experiencing a phenomenon known as “underemployment” (Schmitt & Boushey, 2011). Underemployment can have both objective and subjective features and is defined by an underutilization of skills, working less hours, and earning less money (Livingstone, 2004). For instance, formerly incarcerated men have been found to have access to gainful employment 9 weeks less per year and earn 11% less wages than non-formerly incarcerated men (Duwe & Clark, 2014). Further, underemployment has been linked to challenges with employee identity formation, mental health, and wellbeing (McKee & Harvey, 2011).

Education and the Formerly Incarcerated

Due to increasing accessibility of education within institutions, college students are beginning their academic careers while incarcerated (Copenhaver et al., 2007; Leverentz et al., 2020; Mangan, 2021; Murillo, 2021). In June 2020, there were 11,472 incarcerated students accessing higher education in institutions, and approximately 20,000 formerly incarcerated students enrolled in higher education within the community (Murrillo, 2021). The transition from institution to college life can be especially challenging for the formerly

incarcerated student (Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Tietjan et al., 2020). In addition to the challenges faced during reentry, students must also adapt to the university setting (Anderson et al., 2019).

Structural issues are highly influential in an individual's ability to successfully obtain a college degree. Runell (2017) examines the challenges of pursuing higher education from the formerly incarcerated perspective including influences from pre-carceral life, financial and housing insecurity, and stigmatization. Education and career training can facilitate the development of social capital and economic mobility among formerly incarcerated individuals. Further, research has found that education can increase the employability of formerly incarcerated individuals by accounting for time lost to incarceration and allowing the employer to focus on non-stigmatized aspects of the individual's identity (Owens, 2009). While there is no significant difference in post-release employment attainment among secondary and post-secondary degree earners, those who did earn post-secondary degrees while incarcerated reported working more hours and earning more wages (Duwe & Clark, 2014).

Project Rebound

Project Rebound was founded at California State University San Francisco by Professor John Irwin in 1967. In 2016, the program was implemented on the campus of California State University San Bernardino. Project Rebound is now offered at 14 of the state's 23 CSU campuses. As a transitional reentry program providing services in an educational setting, Project Rebound offers support to

currently and formerly incarcerated students in the form of financial assistance, academic support, community and campus resource linkage, political and legal advocacy, and professional development opportunities, with the overarching goal of increasing participants' career outcomes (Anderson et al., 2019; Murillo 2021). A program outcomes evaluation shows that Project Rebound has maintained a 100 percent retention rate with 66.7 percent of participants on track to graduate in spring of the year of the study. Participants of this program have a zero percent recidivism rate.

Employability

Formerly incarcerated students benefit from institutional-based education in a variety of ways in addition to decreased recidivism, such as 1) the development of personal skills and attributes, 2) building prosocial networks, and 3) strengthening prosocial bonds to traditional institutions (Pelletier & Evans, 2019). To prepare students for graduation and employment, stakeholders including employers, university personnel, graduates, and students suggest that these strategies are most beneficial to further job outcomes: work experience including part-time work, extracurricular activities, volunteerism, career advice, registering with professional associations, and networking (Kinash et al., 2016). Overall, researchers found cohesion among students and employers in the importance of work experience, whereas students and faculty both reported career advice was essential to employability (Kinash et al., 2016).

Capital, commonly perceived as financial assets or wealth, has come to be understood as including any elements that increase access and provide benefits for the individual (Bourdieu, 1986; Tomlinson, 2017). A conceptualized approach to the formulation of capital among college graduates which combines the dimensions of human, social, identity, cultural, and psycho-social capital; has been given the term, “graduate capital” (Tomlinson, 2017). Human capital incorporates hard skills and technical knowledge and can be measured by production, job performance, and skill application (Becker, 1994). Social capital includes networking and interpersonal relationships which can enhance opportunities in career development (Bourdieu, 1986). Identity capital pertains to professional narratives and career insight which serve to stabilize individuals within the positions they hold in the workforce (Strangleman, 2012). Cultural capital embodied awareness of diversity and cultural confidence which allows the employee to become sensitive to cultural expression among individuals and organizations (Bourdieu, 1986). Finally, psychosocial capital encapsulates resilience, self-efficacy, and adaptability, allowing an employee to utilize adversity as a source of personal and professional growth (Chen & Lim, 2012).

Ban the Box

In addition to efforts to increase employability factors among the formerly incarcerated population, Ban the Box initiatives have also been legislated in 29 states throughout the nation (Hank, 2017). The Fair Chance Act was passed in California in 2018 (California Department of Fair Employment and Housing,

2022). Ban the box policies make it illegal for employers to inquire about past convictions on the job application. In fact, employers under Ban the Box policies may only ask about past convictions following a conditional job offer (Hank, 2017). While these policies are intended to disallow blanket bans and exclusion based on legal status, some researchers posit that these policies have had unintended discriminative effects for applicants from minority populations (Agan & Starr, 2018).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

An individual's development is conditioned within the unique interface of multiple levels of systems that constitute his/her/their environment. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1977) definitions of the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem, one can view the challenges of reentry and reintegration experienced by formerly incarcerated college graduates at all levels throughout their lifespan. The ecological systems theory proposes that humans exist in an interrelated, dynamic set of systems that function within the laws of reciprocity and equifinality (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The formerly incarcerated college graduate population is surrounded by systems that create barriers and opportunities.

Primarily, microsystems, which are interpersonal relationships with others and immediate settings, are essential to the fundamental necessities of reintegration. Not only are these relationships the underpinning of desistance among FICG, but they are also early indicators of the inclination toward

delinquency. The mesosystem encapsulates the dynamic relationships between the individual's major settings such as the family setting, the university setting, and the reentry service provider setting. When referring to the exosystem, Bronfenbrenner examines the social structures that surround, but do not directly contact, the individual. Some examples of these structures for formerly incarcerated college graduates include the labor market, governmental agencies, and informal social networks. The macrosystem in which the formerly incarcerated college student exists consists of legal and political institutions which contribute to the deviant label assumed, as well as the social and cultural systems which reinforce the associated stigma. Finally, the chronosystem considers changes to the individual and social ecology across the lifespan.

Social work researchers (e.g., Contreras, 2019; Koehler & Parrell, 2020; Navarro, 2019; Ramirez & Rodriguez, 2019) have evaluated the theoretical quality of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model, using the Theory Evaluation Scale (TES) developed by social work experts Rigaud Joseph and Mark J. Macgowan in the late 2010s (Joseph & Macgowan, 2019). The TES is the only transdisciplinary theory-analysis instrument available in the literature (Joseph, 2022). Scholars and researchers have used this measure to appraise various social work theories (Drew et al., 2021; Joseph, 2020a; Joseph, 2020b; Joseph, 2021; Joseph et al., 2022; Stoeffler & Joseph, 2020). Despite its limitations, mainly in terms of empiricism, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model was found to

have excellent overall quality under the TES (Contreras, 2019; Koehler & Parrell, 2020; Navarro, 2019; Ramirez & Rodriguez, 2019).

Summary

Unemployment among the formerly incarcerated population is partially due to employers' perception of the risks of repetition of lawbreaking behaviors. The racial disparity among whites and minorities seems to also be a contributing factor in the unemployment rates. While education level is a significant factor when employment is being considered, many of these individuals have completed a post-secondary degree and still face a disparity in their employment. Furthermore, underemployment continues to be an issue with this population. This study seeks to explore and add to the knowledge and understanding of the underemployment and unemployment of the FICG population.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This study explored the job seeking experiences of formerly incarcerated college graduates who participated in an on-campus reentry program. Career preparation services provided by one California State University (CSU) Project Rebound, and the community were explored and evaluated by respondents. This chapter explains the specific methods used to facilitate this study including the design, the sampling methods, strategies for data collection including instrumentation, procedures employed, efforts implemented to protect human subjects, and data analysis.

Study Design

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the career outcomes of graduate participants of a CSU Project Rebound since its inception, and to identify which services provided have contributed to the employability of formerly incarcerated college graduates. This study used a qualitative, cross-sectional exploratory research design to gain insight into the career-seeking experiences of formerly incarcerated college graduates. The proposed study explores this subject and contributes to the literature. In addition, this study identifies strategies for assisting formerly incarcerated college students with career development.

One limitation to a qualitative research design is that the researchers obtained a small sample size. This factor prevented findings from being generalizable to the entire population. Another limitation to the qualitative design is the subjective nature of the responses, which are contingent on the respondents' memory. As a cross-sectional research design, the proposed study only accounts for experiences at one point in time. In addition, the participants' graduation timeline can also be a limitation to the results. Participants graduated for at least 1 year prior to the study, which limits the amount of time for successful career opportunities.

Sampling

The researchers obtained contact information of participant graduates of the Project Rebound program from the agency. Agency approval has been provided for the release of this information. The researchers drew from a sample frame of 30 graduated students. The respondents are graduates who participated in a CSU Project Rebound program. Students who are eligible to participate in Project Rebound must be formerly incarcerated or have been involved with the criminal justice system and admitted to a university that hosts a CSU Project Rebound program. The demographic makeup of Project Rebound participants is diverse and reflective of their environment. The participant population contained individuals who identify as male, female, non-binary and/or other. Respondents have all graduated with a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or a doctoral degree. This study used a non-probability, purposive sampling method. The

respondents selected were Project Rebound participant graduates who graduated at least one year prior to the interview and have engaged in job-searching activities post-graduation.

Data Collection and Instruments

The researchers administered an interview guide containing 8 qualitative questions. In addition, the researchers collected demographic information using a Qualtrics survey. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom or telephone. The researchers collected demographic information, college major and degree, current job, and graduation date. The researchers also collected qualitative data relating to respondents' perceptions of career seeking post-graduation, the perceived benefits of services provided by Project Rebound, and satisfaction with current employment. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, independent and dependent variables are not yet clearly defined, however, the results can be analyzed by conceptualizing the independent variable of career outcomes against the dependent variable of services received.

Hence, the researchers utilized a Qualtrics survey for the demographic questions, and an 8-question interview guide for the qualitative questions. The demographic questions and interview guide are attached on Appendix A. The questions posed in the guide are informed by the literature surrounding this topic and population. The research team collaboratively developed the questions to address the research question. The interview guide was tested for face validity,

content validity, and overall reliability in various ways. First, the researchers collaborated with their instructor and research advisor to determine the feasibility and content validity of the questions posed. Next, the interview guide was piloted with a test group. The pilot group was composed of individuals who are representative of the population and therefore provided feedback regarding the content validity and cultural sensitivity of the questions posed. A strength of the instrument is that it is guided by the literature and reflective of common issues reported by this population. Additionally, the questions were guided by the anecdotal experience of the research team gained by working with this population. One limitation of the interview guide is that it was not piloted with actual respondents prior to data collection.

Procedures

Each participant was recruited from contact information provided by Project Rebound. The outreach methods used for recruitment were by phone or email. A recruitment email script is attached in Appendix B. The respondents were selected based on criteria to participate in study. The researchers asked for consent from respondents to participate in the study. Each respondent was interviewed via Zoom or telephone, the location of each participant may vary. The Qualtrics survey will collect demographic information, and the recorded audio will be collected for transcription. Interviews were automatically transcribed using the function provided in the Zoom platform, and audio recordings were utilized to ensure accuracy in transcription. Recruitment and data collection

occurred after IRB approval was achieved. Researchers submitted the application to the IRB no later than October 28, 2021. Participants were recruited using emails or phone calls. Respondents arranged a date and time to meet via Zoom to complete interviews. Interviews were facilitated between the Fall 2021 Semester and the Spring 2022 Semester. During the Spring 2022 Semester, data was synthesized and analyzed.

Protection of Human Subjects

IRB approval was sought and obtained prior to recruitment and data collection. Participants provided informed consent prior to conducting the interview. Informed consent was included as a part of the Qualtrics survey, due to the restrictions of in-person interviewing at this time. A copy of the informed consent for this study is attached in Appendix C. All data obtained was kept confidential. The data was shared among the research team, which consists of the two primary researchers and the research advisor. Audio recordings and transcribed documents were kept secure in both primary researchers' student Google Drives. The research team accessed data using password protected, personal laptops. Demographic data was submitted anonymously and kept in a Qualtrics survey which was administered by the research team. The researchers are the only ones who have access to this data. If requested, the participants' faces were protected from identification during Zoom interviews by selecting the camera off feature that the platform provides. Researchers protected respondents' information by using private locations to administer interviews.

Audio files and transcriptions were deleted after data was collected and transcribed.

There are minimal risks associated with the proposed study. Respondents may experience discomfort in discussing adverse job-seeking experiences related to conviction status, race, gender, or any other factors that may be perceived as the cause of the discrimination experienced. Researchers anticipated these possibilities and have resources available to provide to respondents. If needed, respondents will be provided with information on how to file a complaint of employment discrimination with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing. Further, respondents may be in need of assistance in their employment search. Resources for employment opportunities specific to this population will also be available. This information will be available to mitigate any risk that the human subjects may encounter as a result of engaging in the interview. While there are no immediate benefits to the respondents, this study can benefit this population in the long term by identifying discrimination faced in the labor market and guiding strategies to address these challenges.

Data Analysis

The researchers transcribed the interview and analyzed the data, using thematic analysis procedures. Thematic analysis is a useful, step-by-step analytical method for qualitative data (Labra et al., 2019). Each respondent was assigned a number in a spreadsheet. The questions were aligned along the X-axis of the table. Themes from each question were coded in the spreadsheet

under the relevant question. The researchers then identified patterns relating to career preparation services received, respondents' perceptions of those services, adverse experiences in job-searching activities, and beneficial experiences in job-searching activities. A separate table was also created to record relevant or poignant quotes provided by the respondents. The researchers used the demographic data for descriptive purposes only.

Summary

This qualitative, cross-sectional study attempted to identify conduits to success and barriers to employment among formerly incarcerated college graduates. The respondents were individuals who have participated in a campus-based reentry program. Respondents engaged in qualitative interviews via Zoom or over the phone. Guided interviews were transcribed and thematically coded for patterns. Every effort to protect respondents' well-being and identity was taken.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Frequency Distributions

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study participants (N = 13). As exhibited in the table, the majority of respondents reported being younger than 45 years old, with 15 % between the ages of 25 and 34. Over three-quarters of the participants were male, which is reflective of the gender gap in national incarceration rates. Regarding race and ethnicity, over one half of the respondents reported Hispanic heritage, while just under one-third identified as African American. In terms of relationship status, just under one-half of respondents reported being single, while the majority were married or in a relationship.

Related to employment status, nearly three quarters of respondents reported full time employment, while the other respondents were employed part-time or unemployed. Over three-quarters of respondents reported becoming employed within 3 months of graduation. The remaining respondents became employed in between 3 to 6 months of graduation, while one reported no employment after graduation. Income was reported, with less than half of the respondents indicating an income of less than \$49,999, and only one respondent earning less than \$25,000. Overall, slightly more than one half of respondents indicated earning \$50,000 or more, with one respondent earning \$75,000 or more.

While the majority of respondents were employed in their field of study (over one-half), just under one-half were working in jobs outside of their field. Occupations reported included contractor, electrical engineer, security guard, administrator, case manager, clinician, program director, college instructor, and leasing consultant. Education information was obtained from respondents. Over half of the respondents were first generation college graduates. As far as education level, just over half of the respondents earned a graduate degree, while the remaining earned an undergraduate degree. All but one respondent majored in social sciences. Of the respondents, under one half graduated in or before 2018, while over one half graduated in or after 2019.

Table 1*Sample Demographic Characteristics (N=13)*

Variables	n	%
Age		
Younger than 45	8	61.53
45 and older	5	38.46
Gender		
Male	10	76.92
Female	3	23.07
Race/ethnicity		
African American	4	30.77
Hispanic	7	53.85
White	2	15.38
Marital status		
Single	6	46.15
Married/in a relationship	7	53.85
Employment status		
Employed full-time	9	69.23
Employed part-time	2	15.38
Unemployed	2	15.38
Income		
Under \$49,999	6	46.15
\$50,000 and over	7	53.84
Time to become employed		
3 months or less	10	76.92
Between 3 months and 6 months	2	15.38
N/A	1	7.69
Employed in field studied		
Yes	7	53.84
No	6	46.15
First Generation		
Yes	8	61.54
No	5	38.46
Highest level of education		
Undergraduate degree	6	46.15
Graduate degree	7	53.84
Major		
Social sciences	12	92.30
Non-social sciences	1	7.69

Qualitative Findings

Graduates Perceptions of Career Building Services

Theme 1: There is a broad range of support that constitutes the career-building network of formerly incarcerated college graduates.

The qualitative data obtained supports the utilization of a broad range of career building support by formerly incarcerated college students. Themes reported reflected career building support obtained from a campus-based reentry program, general university services, and the broader community. Regarding the reentry program, respondents reported receiving social, career, legal, academic, and financial support. Respondents also shared that involvement in the campus-based reentry program aided toward an overall feeling of belongingness and an increase in confidence. Respondents reported benefits from referrals to various on and off campus resources. As far as services offered by the university, respondents reported receiving administrative, academic, financial, and career support. Some respondents reported engaging in different student support programs offered on campus. A few respondents gained direct employment from the university as well. Relatedly, respondents also reported receiving career building services from the greater community. Some of the support received came from county agencies, legal advocates, community coalitions, previously attended community colleges, the NASW council, court programs, transportation services, on-line job search engines, community funding opportunities, and temp agencies.

Major themes emerged as graduates discussed the career building services received from the campus-based reentry program. Mentorship was the most commented upon service obtained by staff and peers associated with the agency. Graduates agreed that having access to staff with lived experience was helpful and empowering. Respondent #3 (male) reported the following, “[The reentry program] did help me to be affiliated with people who have already been through the process.” Moreover, graduates were provided with one-on-one support through mentorship which created a safe space for students to receive encouragement and validation. Respondent #9 (female) stated the following, “we sat down and talked for like an hour and [staff] told me that I would be okay and encouraged me to keep pursuing that goal.” Respondents also shared that they were encouraged to pursue graduate school by mentorship from staff at the reentry program. In regard to post-bachelorette education, respondent #4 (male) stated, “project rebound offered me a career path.” Similarly, graduates were empowered through connection with peers. Interviewee #5 (male) found a sense of connection among fellow participants, stating, “[the reentry program] made me realize that I wasn't the only convict in the university. I felt different than everyone else but then I started meeting people from project rebound.”

Respondents overwhelmingly shared that they were provided with confidence and resilience as a fundamental service provided by the reentry program. These factors increased their success as they pursued higher education and began their job search. Respondent #3 (male) stated the

following, “I think it just helped me to feel confident in understanding that even though I had a record that I was introduced to other project rebound members who were already working in the same field as I was going into. So, it allowed me to be more confident to understand that becoming licensed within social work was a possibility. Respondent #5 (male) shared a similar experience, stating, “I think, if anything, they just gave me the confidence to be myself... [the reentry program] helped me with self-development and just to have more confidence within myself to be a better member of society.” Moreover, the reentry program assisted respondents with gaining work experience by offering internships, and subsequent post-graduate employment of two interviewees.

Interviewees also received beneficial career-building services from the university. Some of the most prevalently mentioned services in regard to career development were networking, job-seeking support, and direct support from faculty and staff. Interviewees shared benefits resulting from the personal and professional networks formed through interactions with campus departments and peers. Career building support, including mock interviews and resume building, were received from the campus career center and from individual graduate programs. Further, the campus is also credited with hosting job fairs which were deemed beneficial to job seeking students. Respondent #3 (male) shared, “During the job fairs, we were able to ask questions. We were able to go from booth to booth and network with employers that we were interested in pursuing after we graduated our master's program.”

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that support received from faculty and staff, including mentorship and letters of recommendation, were the most beneficial career preparation services obtained from the university attended. Respondent #11 (male) shared, “My professors were instrumental in not only pointing me in the right direction but helping me to produce the paperwork that I needed. I had help from professors with networking, recommendations, and how I should structure my resume. They even helped me to develop my education plan.” Respondent #2 (male) stated, “professors give their support and the letters of recommendation...those benefited me very much.” Additionally, interviewees utilized additional campus resources such as services for students with disabilities (SSD), workability services associated with the Department of Rehabilitation, and supplemental financial and advising programs such as SAIL and EOP. Respondent #5 (male) gained direct employment from the university as a student worker.

Respondents reported obtaining services that enhanced their career seeking experiences from the community which included social services, legal advocacy groups, and employment services. Multiple respondents reported receiving services for the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) which is an agency that assists individuals who are differently abled join the workforce. Participant #1 (male) commented on receiving a “LEAP letter,” which, he shared, “will help you attain a position at a county or state or federal agency, and they know that you're disabled.” Participant #5 (male) shared that his involvement with the DOR led to

his chosen career path, stating “I decided that I wanted to be a counselor of some sort... I knew I had a record, so I was wondering if I can work in a setting like that and yeah, they've hired people with records before. That's another reason why I went down that road.”

Legal advocacy groups, including Root and Rebound, the Inland Empire Fair Chance Coalition (IEFCC), and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Council of Inclusion and Rehabilitation, were also described by respondents as helpful in their career development. These organizations were instrumental in providing legal support and opportunities to graduates to learn to advocate for themselves and others. Participant #3 (male) shared, “through the IEFCC and [the reentry program], I had the opportunity to be the keynote speaker for [a community even shared that he became involved with a specific group of social workers who were concerned with improving access to licensure for formerly incarcerated individuals. Regarding the legal advocacy group, participant #3 (male) reported the following, “I got in touch with the organization Root and Rebound and they helped me out if I need a letter of recommendation or they help explain the steps I should take in order to get the job.” Respondents also mentioned gaining support within the community from previously attended junior colleges in the form of recommendations and information about job opportunities. Respondent #9 (female) shared, “My transfer counselor from [the junior college] actually referred me to the job that I still have now. I've been there for two and a half years.”

Graduates' Perceptions of Service Deficiencies

Theme 2: Deficiencies exist within the broad range of support necessary for increased career outcomes.

While respondents reported that Project Rebound provided resources and personnel that were useful for their career-seeking opportunities and academic achievements, respondents reported several resources that can be beneficial for future Project Rebound participants. Deficiencies were noted by respondents in the areas of networking, advising, resources, and student involvement.

Respondents shared that career-building networking opportunities provided by the reentry program could be improved by the inclusion of “felon-friendly employers” and more connections with faculty and staff from different majors on campus. Graduates felt that the latter could result in more major-driven mentorship available to FICS. In addition, respondents agreed that advising services, including guiding students toward degrees that will allow them opportunities despite having a record, could be improved upon. Respondent #5 (male) remarked, “It would have been helpful if I was told how difficult it would be to get a job despite having a master’s degree.” Resource deficiencies were also identified including financial resources and information on professional licensure. Finally, graduate respondents shared that current FICS would benefit from more involvement in the reentry program. Some suggestions made were to devise and implement career-building workshops and offer incentives for students who

attend, as well as to continue to engage with students who have graduated by creating an “aftercare program.”

Respondents reported that the university campus provided many helpful and useful resources; however, areas of improvement to increase career preparedness were suggested related to advising, mentorship, and career guidance. Respondents pointed out that faculty and staff could better assist FICS by having more knowledge of the career-seeking challenges and opportunities unique to the population. Respondent #6 posited that hiring staff and faculty with lived experience would increase the legitimacy of career-related information available to students. Several respondents shared that they may have benefited from major-specific employment information communicated in person or via email, as opposed to the mass email techniques currently utilized by the university. While interviewees shared that they readily accessed services available at the campus career center, respondents also noted that they would have benefited from major-specific employability strategies including mock interviews and resume building. Respondent #11(male) discussed his difficulty obtaining a position post-graduation due to the format of his resume. Moreover, graduates felt it necessary to comment upon the limited space and opportunities available for the formerly incarcerated student population on campus. Respondents shared that this population would be empowered if the campus offered a “safe space” for students to engage in workshops and present

information specific to the experiences of the formerly incarcerated college student and/or graduate.

Experiences during the Job-Seeking Process

Theme #3: Respondents report a 'mixed bag' in terms of career seeking experiences post-graduation.

Graduates reported both positive and negative career seeking experiences post-graduation. The types of career-seeking experiences varied by respondent regarding access to employment opportunities, self-perceived preparedness, and the hiring process. Respondents who reported negative experiences while seeking employment reported the challenges such as criminal records which prevented them from gaining employment and resulted in "failing background checks." Other negative experiences reported included settling for low wages, working multiple jobs to "pay the bills," working more or less hours than preferred, and long commutes for jobs they were eligible for. Respondent #5 (male) reported the following, "I had to settle for what my life really is." Interviewee #10 (male) felt that "most places didn't care that I had a degree."

Respondents also shared that they experienced challenges with online job searching platforms related to resume formatting. For respondents who encountered positive experiences while seeking employment, they reported experiences such as being directly connected with an employer via the campus-based reentry program and feeling prepared for the job search process due to the services received while at the university. One respondent shared that his

internship led to employment, and some respondents were hired directly after graduation. Respondents reported building relationships as a positive experience. Respondent #7 (female) had been offered jobs but denied them because they were continuing her education. Respondent #8 (female) received a promotion from the warehouse level and became employed with human resources within the organization. One respondent reported turning down more money to work in the nonprofit sector.

Experiences in the Workplace

Theme #4: Despite progress, a lot remains to be seen in terms of reintegrating formerly incarcerated college graduates into the workplace.

While policies have been implemented in California to counteract the barriers to employment among the formerly incarcerated population, FICG are still experiencing challenges when integrating into the workforce post-graduation. Respondents have reported working in fields unrelated to their degrees obtained from the university due to their previous convictions. Additionally, respondents have reported a lack of satisfaction in their current jobs related to wages, hours, and distance traveled. Others have reported disliking the characteristics of their current jobs including the type of work and the values of the organization at which they are employed. Interviewee #2 (male) related a lack of job satisfaction to barriers resulting from previous convictions, stating, "I wish I worked more, and I wish I was using my degree. I'm working on getting some things expunged so that I can use my degree."

As evidenced by responses, those who have graduated with a master's degree found career opportunities in their fields, as opposed to those respondents who graduated with only their bachelor's degree. Subsequently, FIGs who did not pursue graduate school demonstrated a trend of becoming underemployed after graduation. Graduates who reported higher job satisfaction in their current occupation found their jobs rewarding, flexible, and challenging. Meanwhile, multiple graduates shared working with the reentry population. Elsewhere, respondents reported additional benefits of their employment including flexibility, independence, and health and retirement benefits. Participants expressed the aforementioned feelings as follows:

It's rewarding in the sense that you get to teach and mentor [students]. It brings a certain amount of satisfaction back to you when there's a positive response and you know that you change a life in the small way that you can.

I get to work with at-risk youth...we help them find jobs and reconnect them to school if they haven't graduated high school...we help them apply for college...I would say my job is very rewarding.

My job was to just conduct research by doing a landscape analysis and getting in touch with all the reentry organizations in the area to address

the gaps and needs of the reentry community. I got in touch with amazing folks doing reentry work.

I am given the opportunity to affect change and do things that can help people.

I'm in charge of a whole team of substance use counselors, peers, and social workers. So I was not really prepared to be in that position, but now I'm getting the hang of it. It's more exciting and it allows me to think a lot further ahead and see how I can be more of an asset to the program.

Graduates' Advice for Career Preparation

Theme #5: Graduates who were proactive in regard to career building strategies reported more positive career seeking experiences and increased job satisfaction.

Having the privilege of hindsight, combined with firsthand experience of seeking a career post-graduation has enabled respondents to provide feedback regarding steps that currently enrolled, formerly incarcerated students can take to ensure best possible outcomes in career attainment. Minor themes discussed related to actions taken to prepare for the labor market prior to graduation, and decisions to consider when in the job-search process. First, respondents encourage FICG to put forth their best effort toward their studies and consider their impact on those who follow:

“I would say, not only take life seriously but take your education seriously. Don't take it for granted because especially being system impacted, there's going to be kind of like a microscope on us to see how we do within our major like in our job preferences that we choose. And if we ever want to turn a corner or make it easier for the next person, then we really have to excel in what it is that we do.”

Relatedly, respondents stress the importance of a “positive mindset,” and remind students to “not let your past affect your present.” Further, respondents offer FICS advice to be better prepared for employment post-graduation, including contacting “felon-friendly employers,” practicing interviewing skills, learning networking techniques, and working toward professional licensure. One respondent suggests that students strongly consider their major with regards to the probability of becoming hired in their field. In addition, respondents overwhelmingly encourage formerly incarcerated students to seek out strategies for post-conviction relief prior to graduation including contacting an attorney or legal advocacy group, pursuing expungement, obtaining a certificate of rehabilitation (COR), and learning about current policies and resources the state has to offer to assist with post-conviction relief. Finally, respondents encourage jobseekers to consider more in the position available than just the pay. Some characteristics of positions discussed were a sense of purpose associated with the job, benefits including health care and retirement funds, and proximity to the place of employment. Respondent #9 summed it up when he suggested, “be

resilient and do not give up because a lot of times you'll hear no, but then you will get the yes that you need.”

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This study explored the career seeking experiences of formerly incarcerated college graduates who participated in a campus-based reentry program. Interviewees reported the types of support received from the support program, the campus, and the community, all of which aided in their successful career attainment. As more Americans are arrested and subsequently released, the stigma of a criminal conviction follows them throughout their lifetimes. This blemish impacts many of the domains of the individual's life, with employment opportunities suffering drastically as a result. The great equalizer, education, could have the potential to increase employment opportunities for this stigmatized population.

As employment is reported to be a major factor in the desistance from criminal behavior and decreased recidivism, this research attempts to identify avenues of career building support for the formerly incarcerated student population. The methods employed included a qualitative approach which resulted in 13 semi-structured interviews with former participants of a campus-based reentry program who have graduated with an undergraduate or graduate degree from a 4-year university in Southern California. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed by the research team to collect and present major and minor themes. The major themes identified were related to the types

of support received which aided in career development, the varying job-seeking and employment experiences of the interviewees, and recommendations for future formerly incarcerated college students.

Overall, the findings obtained from this study are consistent with the findings of fellow researchers investigating this population. The need for various types of support for the formerly incarcerated college student has been represented in the literature (Anderson et al, 2019; Donaldson & Viera, 2021). Moreover, mentorship has been shown to be beneficial in multiple domains including interpersonal encouragement, establishing social capital, and strengthening self-efficacy among this population (Tietjan et al., 2020). Although reentry programs in educational settings are becoming more common, Donaldson and Viera (2021) point out that these support programs are in need of additional funding sources to support programming, which is consistent with the findings of this study indicating that some deficiencies exist within the services available to the formerly incarcerated college student population.

The variability in career seeking experiences reported by the respondents in this study is consistent with Owen's (2009) claim that, although obtaining post-secondary degrees does not negate the social stigma ascribed to this population, college education can alleviate some challenges during job searching such as explaining gaps in resumes and drawing attention to non-criminal aspects of the individual's identity. While Fair Chance policies are being implemented to address the unemployment rate among the formerly incarcerated population

(Hank, 2017), more efforts are required to manage the enduring stigma of criminal conviction (Owens, 2009).

Implications of the Findings for Practice, Policy, and Research

Implications of the Findings for Theory

The theoretical lens used to conceptualize the issue of employability among FICG is the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner's claim that each individual is functioning within a series of interrelated systems is evident in the results of this research project. Interactions between the individual and the micro system should be understood in the responses that interviewees gave regarding their relationships with program staff, university faculty, and peers in the program who offered professional encouragement and support to the graduate. The mesosystem, representing the relationship between the reentry program, the university, and the Southern Californian community, has also been shown to have varying effects on the career outcomes of the individuals represented in this study.

The labor market represents a system within which the graduate operates, but has little direct effect upon, and is understood in this study as the exosystem. Social institutions such as the legal and political landscape surrounding the FICG are referred to as the macro system. In addition to these formal institutions of the macro system, the FICG must also sustain informal macro level implications of stigma and discrimination, which can negatively affect career outcomes. Finally, the chronosystem, related to changes over time, is evident in the changes in life

trajectory of the FICG, as well as the sustainability of informal sanctions that are prolific long after the sentence has been served. Overall, the FICG operates within a network of interrelated, dynamic systems which have the potential to alter the career outcomes of each individual.

Implications of the Findings for Research

The findings of the study have contributed to the literature on the career-building support necessary for this unique population. While researchers have examined the relationships between employability and recidivism, and education and recidivism, little has been researched in relation to the effects of tertiary education attainment on the employability, and overall job satisfaction, of graduates with criminal convictions. Subsequently, this study allows scholars to have a better understanding of career outcomes of FICG. This study begins to address the effectiveness of campus-based career building support services for the formerly incarcerated student population. Moreover, this study highlights some of the efforts that can be taken to improve career outcomes for this marginalized population.

Implications of the Findings for Social Work Practice

As reentry services are coming to the forefront of local and national efforts to decrease recidivism, the role of the social worker in forensic and reentry services is expanding. The study encourages social workers to understand the unique strengths and challenges that this population is affected by. Social workers adhere to a set of standards which guide the profession. The NASW

Code of Ethics tells social workers that each individual should be afforded dignity and possess inherent worth. Social stigma imposed upon the formerly incarcerated individual attempts to derive these basic, fundamental rights. Due to the stigmatization faced by this population, these individuals have been marginalized by society and face greater challenges to achieving well-being. Social work's commitment to social justice compels the profession to engage with this population at the micro level and advocate for social change at the macro level. Moreover, the findings of this research will guide social work practice within reentry service programs focused on the development of career building services for the population served.

Implications of the Findings for Policy

The findings of this study pose implications for policy practice as well. Fair hiring policies, such as "Ban the Box," have been widely instituted, however, this policy requires more oversight and evaluation than it is currently receiving in the community in question. Furthermore, policymakers should consider the unique challenges experienced by the FICG population about stigma within the workplace. Although there are laws that may insulate the formerly incarcerated individuals from workplace discrimination, there is currently no policy that identifies this population as a protected class under the law. Other policy implications of this research pertain to the allocation of funds for professional development among formerly incarcerated college students. Subsidized employment or internship opportunities could help alleviate financial strain faced

by transitioning students, while providing necessary professional experience that can help assuage gaps in employment.

The findings in this study also call on policymakers to increase funding for reentry programs such as Project Rebound programs. Based on its findings, this study demonstrates that such programs, although imperfect, can assist college students post-incarceration and post-graduation. Indeed, services received from Project Rebound enabled many formerly incarcerated students to not only graduate but also seek and secure employment.

Limitations of the Findings

There are notable limitations to this research study, and as such, the findings should be considered with caution. Due to the small sample size (N = 13), the results should not be generalized to the entire population of formerly incarcerated college graduates. Furthermore, despite their best effort, the researchers could not rule out the possibility for social desirability bias in this study. Moreover, the study was also limited demographically, as most of the respondents were male. While an accurate reflection of the current statistics of incarceration by gender, this ratio is not an accurate reflection of the formerly incarcerated student or graduate population. Another limitation that should be considered is the setting and location in which this study was conducted. This study was conducted with participants from one reentry program on the campus of an urban university in Southern California. Local and state policies could have

effects on the data, which will be inconsistent in other locales. In sum, the findings of this study are applicable only within the boundaries of its setting.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should include a larger sampling size composed of FICG obtained through random sampling methods. Further, studies should be conducted in various locations within the U.S. to generalize findings. The city and state where this study was conducted only makes up a small sample size of the population that is being studied. In addition, future researchers should take care to obtain a more diversified sample population that is more representative of the FICG population. Finally, future researchers could eliminate the possibility of social desirability bias by providing structured surveys to be administered and submitted anonymously.

Conclusion

In conclusion, FICG face many obstacles while seeking employment in their chosen field of study. Universities have implemented campus-based reentry programs to support FICG through their challenges and college experiences. The study found positive and negative experiences for their job seeking experiences after participating in a campus-based reentry program. Some respondents reported facing challenges while seeking employment despite participating in a campus-based reentry program. A common theme was respondents failing background checks due to their system-impacted background. Respondents

reported that the campus-based reentry program offered mentorship and guidance, resume preparation, and preparation for interviews which helped them develop skills for applying to and working in their chosen field of study. Respondents also reported benefiting from using career building strategies such as working towards expungement of their record(s), network and communicating with felon-friendly employers, taking a position that does not feel like a job, practicing interviewing skills, and learning more about local resources in the community or state. Respondents found that mentorship, networking, peer support, and workshops provided by a campus-based reentry program were beneficial components in their professional development.

APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to evaluate the career outcomes of graduates who participated in a campus-based reentry program. The study is being conducted by Roberta Fox and Jesse Rodriguez, both graduate students under the supervision of Dr. Rigaud Joseph, Assistant Professor of Social Work and Research & Internship Coordinator for Project Rebound at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at CSUSB.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to investigate the career seeking experiences of formerly incarcerated college graduates who participated in a campus-based reentry program.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked questions related to job seeking experiences post-graduation, perspectives on services provided by Project Rebound or CSUSB which helped improve career outcomes, and services obtained elsewhere which were impactful on career attainment. Participants will also be asked some demographic questions.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION & RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to refuse participation or withdraw at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT: All responses will remain confidential. Demographic data will be presented in group form, and interview material collected will be presented anonymously.

DURATION: Participation in the interview should take 30 minutes.

RISK & BENEFITS: There is no immediate benefit from participating in this research, but the data collected will add to the limited amount of research in this area. It is highly unlikely that you will experience any type of distress from providing the audio recordings of your interviews to be transcribed.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS: If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, please contact research advisor, Dr. Rigaud Joseph at (909) 537-5507 or at Rigaud.joseph@csusb.edu.

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library Scholar Works database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2022.

STUDY PARTICIPATION CONSENT

I agree to be audio recorded: _____ Yes _____ NO

By signing below, I indicate that I consent to provide previously collected materials for transcription. I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.

Place an X Mark Here

Date

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographics

- Age: _____
- Gender: Male Female Non-Binary Other
- Race/ethnicity: American Indian/Alaskan Native Asian American African American Hispanic/Latinx Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander White Unknown
- Income: 0-\$25,000 25,001-\$50,000 \$50,001-75,000 \$75,001 or more
- Are you a first-generation college student? Yes No
- Highest level of education: Bachelor Master Doctorate
- What was your major at CSUSB? _____
- What year did you graduate? _____
- Are you currently employed? Yes No
- How long after graduation did you become employed? 3 months or less 3 months to 6 months 6 months to 1 year 1 year or more
- What is your current occupation? _____

Interview Questions

- In what ways, if any, did Project Rebound help prepare you for finding a job in your chosen field of study? (ex: hard/soft skill development, professional development, career opportunities, networking, internships)
- In what ways, if any, did other services provided by CSUSB help prepare you for finding a job in your chosen field of study? (ex: hard/soft skill development, professional development, career opportunities, networking, internships)
- In what ways, if any, did other services provided by agencies in the community help prepare you for finding a job in your chosen field of study?
- Describe your positive or negative experiences while seeking employment after graduation.
- Describe your satisfaction with your current job.
- On a scale from 1-10 (0 not helpful-10 very helpful), how helpful was Project Rebound in preparing you for the labor market after graduation?
 - What factors would make the number increase or decrease?
- On a scale from 1-10 (0 not helpful-10 very helpful), how helpful were services provided by the university in preparing you for the labor market after graduation?
 - What factors would make the number increase or decrease?
- What suggestions for career preparation do you have for system-impacted college students who will be entering the labor market after graduation?

Guide developed by Roberta Fox and Jesse Rodriguez

APPENDIX C
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

November 5, 2021

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Administrative/Exempt Review Determination

Status: Determined Exempt

IRB-FY2022-42

Rigaud Joseph Jesse Rodriguez, Roberta Fox

CSBS - Social Work

California State University, San Bernardino

5500 University Parkway

San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Rigaud Joseph Jesse Rodriguez, Roberta Fox:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Career Outcomes for Formerly Incarcerated College Graduates: A Qualitative Study" has been reviewed and determined exempt by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. An exempt determination means your study had met the federal requirements for exempt status under 45 CFR 46.104. The CSUSB IRB has weighed the risks and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants.

This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses. Investigators should consider the changing COVID-19 circumstances based on current CDC, California Department of Public Health, and campus guidance and submit appropriate protocol modifications to the IRB as needed. CSUSB campus and affiliate health screenings should be completed for all campus human research related activities. Human research activities conducted at off-campus sites should follow CDC, California Department of Public Health, and local guidance. See CSUSB's [COVID-19 Prevention Plan](#) for more information regarding campus requirements.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. The Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have

completed your study.

- Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.
- Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the **IRB** before being implemented in your study.
- Notify the **IRB** within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.
- Submit a study closure through the Cayuse **IRB** submission system once your study has ended.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2022-42 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive from participants and/or others related to your research may be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Nicole Dabbs

Nicole Dabbs, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

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[california-community-colleges/](https://law.stanford.edu/publications/striving-for-success-the-academic-achievements-of-incarcerated-and-formerly-incarcerated-students-in-california-community-colleges/)

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(For joint projects only)

ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:

Assigned leader: Jesse
Assisted by: Roberta

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Assigned leader: Roberta
Assisted by: Jesse

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

a. Introduction and Literature

Assigned Leader: Roberta
Assisted by: Jesse

b. Methods

Assigned Leader: Jesse
Assisted by: Roberta

c. Results

Joint effort: Roberta and Jesse

d. Discussion

Joint effort: Roberta and Jesse
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