



## National Conference for Hidden Student Populations

nchp@okstate.edu

<https://nchp.okstate.edu>

### Current Hidden College Student Populations

May include those who have foster care histories, justice-involved experiences, who are survivors of sexual violence or sex workers, recovering substances addicts, who face housing insecurity, who are considered Third Culture Kids/Individuals, who have sought/seeking abortion care, or who have undergone or are in the process of gender reassignment.

### NCHP Conference Fellows

Dr. Jennifer Geiger,  
University of Illinois, Chicago

Dr. Royel Johnson,  
University of Southern California

Dr. Kerri Kearney,  
Oklahoma State University

Dr. Megan Piel,  
University of Texas, San Antonio

Dr. Lori Tiller,  
University of Georgia

Dr. Lisa Will,  
Oklahoma State University



**The Scholar-Practitioner** is a monthly publication of research summaries that targets the research-to-practice-to-research gap for U.S. scholar and practitioner advocates for hidden college student populations.

This publication reinforces the work of the **National Conference for Hidden Student Populations (NCHP)** by providing a space to share research applications for practice. **NCHP** was the first research conference dedicated to this multidisciplinary area of study.

The **NCHP 5th conference** will be held February 25 - 28, 2025, at Arizona State University. [Call for proposals is now open!](#)

## Incarcerated to Educated: The On-Campus Experiences of College Students Post Incarceration

Comer, T. (2024). *Incarcerated to educated: The on-campus experiences of college students post incarceration*. [Master's thesis, Eastern Illinois University] Masters Theses, 5003. <https://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/5003>

The previously incarcerated student population is under-researched and often overlooked in discussions of recruiting adult learners into higher education. The lack of research on this population, coupled with my passion for criminological topics compelled me to further research this topic. The purpose of my qualitative (Patten, 2014) and narrative study (Krefting, 1991) was to explore the essence of being an on-campus college student post-incarceration. My study investigated not only the obstacles participants faced but the types of support they had as well.

The study utilized one-on-one interviews that were conducted via Zoom or phone call. Participants were asked about the perceived support they received from their peers and institution, as well as areas in which they may not have had adequate support or resources but would have greatly benefited from having them.

Participants were recruited through Facebook groups that were established to provide support for previously incarcerated individuals. I recruited three participants who identified as White and males, but the charges were dissimilar. The first participant was 52 years old and served 18 years in a maximum-security facility after being convicted of trafficking and manufacturing 28-100 grams of methamphetamine, third-degree burglary of a building, unlawful possession of a firearm, and assault on a police officer. The second participant was 31 years old and served four and a half years in a medium-security facility for involuntary manslaughter. The third participant was 67 years old and served 14 months in a maximum-security facility for voluntary manslaughter.

After coding each interview, I was able to find themes of support and mentorship. One participant did not feel supported by one of his professors, but his reasoning was unrelated to his criminality. This was the only participant who did not disclose his criminal history to anyone due to concerns about being stigmatized. However, the other two participants who did disclose their criminality to their instructors and peers felt that their instructors were supportive of their efforts to complete their degree and certificates and one of those two participants was able to establish meaningful connections with his peers that are still maintained today. All three participants discussed various means of obtaining financial aid that were also commonplace among many non-felonious students: loans, scholarships, and the G.I. Bill.

When asked about sources of challenge, none of the participants had challenges due to their criminal history. Two participants discussed their experience with being unable to obtain on-campus housing. However, one participant attended a two-year institution that did not provide on-campus housing opportunities, and the other participant was unwilling to abide by the policies outlined in his institution's housing contract.

Ultimately, the criminality of participants did not have a significant impact on their ability to succeed in a collegiate setting; each participant had other factors of their identity that served as an indication as to what type of resources and support they would best benefit from.

Previously incarcerated students' college attainment is comparable to that of non-felonious students, and they should be offered the same type of support and resources as anyone else. Instead of focusing on the fact that these students have served incarceration periods, higher education professionals should look at what other factors contribute to individuals in this population needing assistance. With this in mind, Student Affairs professionals should focus on other factors of their students' identity to best determine what type of resources they may most benefit from. Additionally, college administrators should look to create more opportunities to recruit this population of students into higher education. More can be and should be done to recruit this population into higher education and provide them with the proper resources and support to ensure that they can have the future they are hoping to build for themselves.

## References

- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 214-222.
- Patten, M. L. (2014). *Proposing empirical research: A guide to the fundamentals* (5th ed.). Pycszak Publishing.

## NCHP

Save the date! **Feb 25 - 28, 2025**  
*Arizona State University*  
Call for Proposals **NOW OPEN!**

**Team Leader** - Become a team leader of a multidisciplinary research team.  
Deadline October 1, 2024 (notifications by November 1)

**Team Member** - Become a new multidisciplinary research team member.  
Deadline October 31, 2024 (notifications by December 1)

**Presentations** - Present an original empirical work or practice. Deadline January 10, 2025 (notifications by January 21)

**PDQs** - Lead a think tank discussion.  
Deadline January 10, 2025 (notifications by January 21)

For more information, go to:  
<https://nchp.okstate.edu>



To sign up for ongoing email updates about the 2024 national conference and/or for archives of *The Scholar-Practitioner*, go to: <https://risforthursday.okstate.edu>