



Invited summaries of research for scholar and practitioner advocates for, traditionally hidden college student populations

Current Hidden College Student Populations

May include those who have foster care or justice-involved experiences, who are survivors of sexual violence, who are recovering drug or alcohol addicts, who face housing insecurity, or who are considered Third Culture Kids

R is for Thursday

Network of Oklahoma

risforthursday@okstate.edu

<https://risforthursday.okstate.edu>

National Conference for Engaged Scholarship on Hidden Student Populations

nchp@okstate.edu

<https://nchp.okstate.edu>



The Scholar-Practitioner is a monthly publication of invited research summaries that target the research-to-practice gap for U.S. scholar and practitioner advocates for college students with experiences in foster care and other hidden college student populations.

This publication reinforces the work of the **National Conference for Engaged Scholarship on 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 3rd conference will be held at Oklahoma State University, September 14-16, 2022.

You Are About To Witness The Strength Of Street Knowledge: How Formerly Incarcerated Latinx/A/O Students Transfer Their Knowledge Acquired Through Their Lived Experiences To Find Success In Higher Education And Build Resiliency

Hernandez, J. L. (2019). *You are about to witness the strength of street knowledge: How formerly incarcerated Latinx/a/o students transfer their knowledge acquired through their lived experiences to find success in higher education and build resiliency* [Master's Thesis, California State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Publicly Available Content Database. (2268372975). <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/you-are-about-witness-strength-street-knowledge/docview/2268372975/se-2>

Research Summary

Our country represents 5% of the world's population but accounts for a fourth of the world's incarcerated population (Hawkings, 2011). Because of our incarceration rates and many of those imprisoned, our country has created a new minority of future and current students that are often ignored in research or student services (Halkovic, 2014). For those released, our country's recidivism rate is astonishingly high. In California, for every 10 people released, one half to one-third will return to prison (Mercer, 2009). Furthermore, research shows that when imprisoned people receive education, their chance of recidivating ranges from 5% to 43% (Cho & Tyler, 2013). Moreover, if their education is continued once released, their chances of recidivating are 20% (Potts & Bierlein Palmer, 2014). Moving forward with this knowledge, those incarcerated must be included in equity conversation and be provided intentional services so they may continue their education and successfully reenter after having their freedom stripped from them.

This qualitative study sought to understand how those who chose to continue their education persisted successfully through the higher education pipeline. I sought to understand what strength formerly incarcerated Latinx students (FILS) entered postsecondary education due to their lived experiences. The following questions guided this inquiry.

1. How do formerly incarcerated students successfully navigate higher education?
2. How do formerly incarcerated students use their lived experiences to navigate postsecondary education?
3. How do formerly incarcerated students' strengths help shape their resiliency?

Framework and Methodology

To illuminate the experiences of FILS, I utilized two frameworks to highlight a FILS's

strength, knowledge, and skills because of their past experiences and how they could use those experiences to succeed in higher education. First, I employed Funds of Knowledge which creates contexts for the knowledge a student brings to higher education from home or, in this case, from the streets or jails and prisons (FOK; Gonzalez et al., 1995). The second framework, Community Cultural Wealth (CCW; Yosso, 2005), outlines various forms of capital that are not recognized by dominant cultures. Both frameworks were paired with a qualitative structure to understand the experiences of formerly incarcerated Latinx students. The qualitative process included 16 one-on-one semi-structured interviews, which lasted approximately 60 minutes. Participants were recruited through a snowball sampling method employing my network (Clark & Creswell, 2015).

Findings

Through the qualitative research study, four themes emerged that identified the experiences of formerly incarcerated Latinx students navigating higher education utilizing their previous lived experiences from incarceration. These findings were: obstacles they faced, streetwise, support, and helping others. Through these themes, students provide insight into their experience in higher education. Obstacles they faced provided the chance to highlight how students overcame issues while pursuing their goals. Blocks the students faced often included

homelessness, substance abuse, the stigma of incarceration, and technology. Streetwise provides the foundation for how students employed their previous knowledge, from being incarcerated or growing up on the streets, to thrive in higher education. Support denoted the assistance students sought to help them overcome the barriers they faced. Finally, helping others was a theme that presented the purpose students found while working to receive their degrees in which they sought to better the lives of others who had experienced incarceration. These findings provided the foundation for the following recommendations for practitioners serving FILS.

Recommendations for Practice

1. Providing the student with a thorough onboarding process. This should include an introduction to the campus and the campus technological systems such as canvas or learning how to utilize G-suite products. Furthermore, students should be prepared for starting courses such as understanding verbiage or concepts they may not understand, such as pronouns, going to office hours, and reading a syllabus.
2. Provide students support in building community. Staff should provide students with guidance in starting student organizations and how they can be employed to help others overcome obstacles, especially those faced by newer students.

3. Faculty should understand the issues faced by those who are currently under supervision. Issues such as seeing probation or parole officer on demand or drug tests may lead to unplanned course absences.
4. Administrators should develop intentional programming for formerly incarcerated students. Services that assist with onboarding, academic counseling, tutoring, and dedicated staff available to support students.
5. Ensure staff is trained to provide services for formerly incarcerated students. Training should be like other ally training for identity-specific student populations. Furthermore, training should give insight to the strength and knowledge that FILS holds as they enter the institution to help provide an asset-based support program.

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