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A SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST APPROACH

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My dissertation has been a very personal and eye-opening experience for me. In 2007, when I entered the doctoral program, I knew I wanted to write about mass incarceration of the black male. Coming from a family where incarceration of my family members touched me and so many other people I knew, the notion of incarceration became so normalized as an accepted and expected part of life. We as a family and community were participating in our own oppression. However, as I continued to research and write about this topic, in 2010, Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* was published and the tactic of imprisoning black males for cheap labor and social control complete with how the laws of our country were designed to make it legal, opened my eyes to this complex and multi-layered concept, and I was blown away.

Now it made sense to me how my brothers were put on the school to prison pipeline. Incarceration was waiting for them and there was no way around it. I would like to thank Michelle Alexander for writing such a powerful book. It is the catalyst for this dissertation. It explained so much in terms of the intricate matrix called the criminal justice system. This book shed light on the historical aspects of why imprisonment is the first answer to any mistake a black male can make. I am happy that after mistakes and poor choices, my brother's were able to turn their lives around and lead successful and productive lives. I would like to thank them for their tenacity and unwillingness to give up, for their grit and their determination to reject the negative label that society attempted to put on them. I salute you, my brothers. Onward.

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ABSTRACT

When strong expectations for societal compliance to societal ills, including miseducation, result in mass incarceration of disenfranchised communities; suffering can occur. The more acerbic the incarceration; the greater the injury. Yet, as research and emerging data will bear witness to, some ex-prisoners who experience incarceration do achieve psychological freedom and victory on varying levels.

This is a study about mass incarceration and how the United States imprisons more people per capita than any other country. Imprisoning exorbitant amounts of human capital means imprisoning whole communities – particularly communities of color. Self-determination theory, social learning theory and adult education theory are used as the milieu for data collected from minority male ex-prisoners who managed not to re-offend and who achieve success after release from prison. The aim of the study is to confirm or disconfirm the aforementioned theories while usage of symbolic interaction as the methodology situates this research.

Studies combining a three-prong theoretical approach to understanding ex-offender success after being released from prison are lacking. It is the goal of this study to add this body of research through multifaceted interpretation of interviews to illuminate the voices of those not often in the conversation of educational reform. The collective growth serves an educative purpose because it assists in informing and increasing awareness to the unforgiving laws after a person has paid his debt to society. Implications of this study aspire to inform best teaching practices for curriculum development and classroom management.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Before African American males enter early education, it is imperative that they see images of African American adolescents, African American young adults and African American adult men being self-sufficient, positive, and motivated. Because as unsettling as it is, African American men are being incarcerated at a much higher rate compared to other people of color. The societal ills that African American men have to endure while growing up, pitted against a backdrop of community hopelessness, educational hardship, emotional upheavals, and mental pain are more than the average child in the United States should have to endure (The Sentencing Project, 2010). Scholarly articles describing the phenomenon of growing up black has been the topic of several peer-reviewed articles and books (Kozol, 1991; Du Bois, 1903; Fanon, 1963; Alexander, 2010).

In his 1999 ethnographic depiction of black family life, *The Code of the Street*, Elijah Anderson described in intimate details the inner workings of the lives of young black men who are simply trying to survive life. The people described in his book have had many setbacks, disappointments, let downs, and community problems which bring home the fact that poverty, rampant unemployment, sub-standard education, inadequate housing, incarceration and myriad other societal ills effects not only the community members but all of humanity. The viewpoint of being imprisoned is as entrenched in the lives of young black men as is the outlook of going on vacation for young affluent whites (Fowler, 2011; Heitzeg, 2009; Rowley, 2013).

While this dissertation by no means places full responsibility for success on African American previous offenders, this study analyzes one component of the larger situation that is mass incarceration: how can African American male ex offenders, who have remained out of prison for three years or more, escape the seemingly hopeless cycle of the being victims/offenders? Self-determination, adult education and social learning theory may explain how success among formerly incarcerated African American men. Usually these achievements occur in spite of failing programs (Bellew & Graham, 2007; Petersilia, 2009; Ritter, 2006) set up to assist the African American male ex offender. Therefore, it is dependent upon him to establish an environment of positive self-concepts, which may lead to a successful lifestyle outside prison walls, either by mentor/mentee relationships, consciousness of positive, realistic and attainable self-reliance, or creating and/or taking advantage of constructive learning opportunities.

Let me briefly discuss the above three theories that can explain ex offender African American men's success after release from prison. There is copious research on social learning theory (SLT), adult education theory (AET) and self-determination theory (SDT); however, little research has been done applying all three to formerly incarcerated African American men and people of color. Rotter's (1954) seminal work on social learning (Kahn & Cangemi, 2001) highlights complex social behavior of human beings. For Kahn & Cangemi (2001), it is apparent that Rotter's theory is a social learning theory because it stresses the basic modes of behaving learned in social situations are inextricably fused with needs in social contexts. This theory speaks to participant behaviors before incarceration. During incarceration and continuing after incarceration, my participants may undergo some sort of educational reconstruction process.

Malcolm Knowles' (1970) adult education theory (AET) proposed that, if given the option, adults prefer to be active participants in all phases of the learning process and that self-directed learning provides this opportunity. After incarceration, the insights of AET continue to apply, in that ex-offenders do not suddenly lose the desire to actively participate in their learning, only now self-determination theory takes on a sudden urgency as the complexity of life beyond the prison walls prioritizes the process of psychological integration. SDT begins with the assumption that people are by nature active, with an evolved tendency to engage the environment, assimilate new knowledge and skills, and integrate them into a coherent psychological structure (Reeve, Ryan, et al, in Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008). SDT maintains that integration is the process by which people acknowledge aspects of who they are and bring them into harmony with their values, emotions, identities, beliefs, and basic needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Ryan & Deci, 2008).

In addressing mass incarceration from these three viewpoints, I first provide explanations behind the political rhetoric responsible for legislation that equates social control with carcerality. This process trickles down and then up again into education (Chriss, 2007; Simon, 2010) guaranteeing a population of students who are streamlined from school to prison (Browne, 2002; Fowler, 2011; Houchen & Shippen, 2012; Rowley, 2013). However, restorative practice in schools and restorative justice for an ex prisoner as he reenters society, have been used to, in some cases, reverse this trend (Gonzalez, 2012; Shah, 2012; Zehr, 2005; Furman, et al, 2008).

Background for the Study

Sadly, retributive rather than restorative justice rhetoric prevailed even as discussions about the Civil War, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement began. Reconstruction is most typically described as stretching from 1863 when the North freed the slaves to 1877 (US Library of Congress). The public commonly traces the death of Jim Crow to *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 (“The Rise and Fall”, 2002). Other court cases challenged the Jim Crow premise, such as the 1950 case *McLaurin vs. Oklahoma* which declared that Oklahoma had to desegregate its law school (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2007).

The rhetoric of “law and order” was first mobilized in the 1950s as southern governors and law enforcement officials attempted to generate and mobilize white opposition to the Civil Rights Movement (Alexander, 2010). In the years following the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court case, Alexander cites civil rights activities in the years following *Brown vs. Board of Education* that used direct-action tactics in an effort to force reluctant southern states to desegregate public facilities. Southern governors and law enforcement officials characterized these tactics as criminal and argued that the rise of the Civil Rights Movement was indicative of a breakdown of law and order. Alexander concludes that support of civil rights legislation was derided by southern conservatives as merely “rewarding lawbreakers” (p. 40).

However, during the 1950s a civil rights movement was brewing, emboldened by the Supreme Court’s decisions and a shifting domestic and international political environment. Civil rights leaders, concerned citizens, and progressive clergy launched boycotts, marches, and sit-ins protesting the Jim Crow system. They endured fire hoses,

police dogs, bombings, and beatings by white mobs as well as by the police. An atmosphere of rage and boldness boiled in the South, not unlike the response to emancipation and Reconstruction following the Civil War. Again, racial equality was being forced upon the South by the federal government and by 1956, southern white opposition to desegregation mushroomed into a vicious backlash (Alexander, 2010). In the 84th Congress, North Carolina Senator Sam Ervin, Jr. drafted a document called “The Southern Manifesto.” In it, Alexander states, proclamations detailed how politicians vowed to battle to uphold Jim Crow through legal means. White Citizen’s Councils were formed in almost every Southern city and rural town, comprised primarily of middle- to upper- middle-class whites in business and clergy. Five Southern legislatures passed nearly 50 new Jim Crow laws. In the streets, resistance turned violent. Ku Klux Klan reasserted itself as a powerful terrorist organization, committing castrations, killings, and the bombing of black homes and churches. NAACP leaders were beaten, pistol-whipped, and shot (Marable, 1991).

On June 12, 1963, President Kennedy announced he would deliver to Congress a strong civil rights bill, a declaration that transformed him into a widely recognized ally of the Civil Rights Movement (Marable, 1991). The March on Washington for Jobs and Economic Freedom occurred in August 1963. This wave of activism associated with economic justice helped to focus President John F. Kennedy’s attention on poverty and black unemployment. In the summer of 1963, he initiated a series of staff studies on those subjects. By the end of the summer, he pledged to eradicate poverty, a key legislative objective in 1964. Following Kennedy’s assassination, President Lyndon Johnson, in his 1964 State of the Union Address, called for an unconditional war on poverty, proposing

to Congress the Economic Opportunities Bill of 1964 (Public Broadcasting System, The Presidents).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 officially disassembled the Jim Crow scheme of discrimination in public accommodations, employment, voting, education, federally financed activities (US Department of Justice). The Voting Rights Act of 1965 rendered illegal plentiful discriminatory roadblocks to effective political participation by African Americans and mandated federal review of all new voting regulations (US Department of Justice).

Within five years, the effects of the civil rights revolution were undeniable. Between 1964 and 1968, the percentage of African American adults registered to vote in the South skyrocketed. Additionally, African Americans could now drink from any water fountain, eat at any restaurant, visit amusement parks and shop in department stores that were once off-limits (Alexander, 2010).

By aligning the goals of the Civil Rights Movement with key political goals of poor and working class whites, who were also demanding economic reforms, the Civil Rights Movement began to evolve into a poor people's movement promising to address black and white poverty. King and other civil rights leaders made it clear that they viewed the eradication of economic inequality as the next front in the human rights movement and made great efforts to build multiracial coalitions that sought economic justice for all. Before his assassination, King wanted to bring to the Washington Memorial thousands of the nations disadvantaged in an interracial alliance that embraced rural and ghetto blacks, Appalachian whites, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Native Americans to demand jobs and income. The focus was now on class issues and

King planned a march on Washington with thousands of poor people (US National Archives, 1968).

With the success of the Civil Rights Movement and the launching of the Poor People's Movement, few could deny that a major disruption in the nation's racial equilibrium had occurred. Conservative whites began, once again, to search for a new racial order that would conform to the needs and the constraints of the time. This process took place with the understanding that whatever the new order would be, it would have to be formally race-neutral – it could not involve explicit or clearly intentional race discrimination like Jim Crow. Barred by law from invoking race explicitly, those committed to racial hierarchy were forced to search for new means of achieving their goals according to the new rules of American democracy (Alexander, 2010).

Savvy conservatives quickly developed a new race-neutral language for appealing to old racist sentiments, a language accompanied by a political movement that succeeded in putting the vast majority of blacks back in their place. Proponents of racial hierarchy found they could install a new racial caste system without violating the law or the new limits of acceptable political discourse, by demanding “law and order” rather than “segregation forever” (Alexander, 2010).

Research points to a growing concern that this rise of mass incarceration reflects a backlash to the Civil Rights Movement (Gottschalk, 2006; Haney-Lopez, 2010; Schoenfeld, 2012; Smith, 2012; Wacquant, 2010). Additionally, racialized political rhetoric from politicians targeting and appealing to lower class whites - a group of people who are understandably eager to ensure that they never find themselves trapped at the bottom of the American totem pole (Alexander, 2010).

Need for the Study

Unlike lower class whites, African Americans are a huge portion of the educational achievement gap (Casserly, Lewis, et al, 2102); a chasm swallowing whole communities because of the inequities in funding and the threats of legislative educational reductions. For Page (1997), images of African Americans in adversarial positions with law enforcement and with the justice system are destructive. Correlatively, other images show family life, happiness, success, and educational achievement being portrayed by people who look like someone else (Rawles, 1975).

These images become so entrenched in a young person's subconscious that it becomes a part of the fabric of one's being. For Rav (2004) this description of minority men is a normal pictorial occurrence and if it is normal, then the reality of being in the same situation very soon is all too real. If this is their truth then the act of acquiescing is taking place as they are sitting in school classrooms, surrounded by a lack of educational resources, in an atmosphere uncondusive to learning. Students are trying to learn in old buildings, old tables, chairs, outdated teaching methods, culturally insensitive learning materials. Students have to interact with teachers who are constantly dealing with students with perceived problem behaviors, ride on old school buses, come face to face with frustrated and overworked teachers, and disconnected school administrators (Biddle & Berliner, 2002; Spatig-Afrikaner, 2012).

The students are told that they should get a good education and that they should care about getting a good education. They are told that a good education would serve a wonderful purpose and that they would have a better life. Student's hear bits and pieces of conversations with different teachers throughout their elementary, junior high and high

school career: things like, be self-motivated, get a good education to get a good job somewhere, take the initiative, don't hang out with the bad kids, don't do drugs, turn in homework for a grade without explaining in practical terms how grades help them. Try to graduate high school so one can compete in the world for the janitor job. Be successful in life without asking what success looks like to the students. The conversations continue: Keep trying, just apply yourself, don't end up like the other kids out on the streets selling drugs and getting in trouble, jail is waiting.

However, the conversation that is left hanging in the air unspoken is for the teacher to ask the student how was the visit to the prison last weekend to see a relative, or offer to be a listening ear about the recent funeral. The unspoken versus the spoken conversation above is in keeping with Shevalier & McKenzie's (2012) discussions about Noddings (2002) "caring about" versus "caring for" critical distinctions. According to Noddings "caring about" others is important to moral society and one can be relatively detached. Noddings delineated that "caring for" springs from the capacity to "care about" but occurs within ongoing face-to-face relationships, where one focuses attention intensely, experiences the issues, sees the consequences, and understands how one's caring affects others

A mature adult would have trouble with the aforementioned scenarios but it is an environment that certain minority adolescents endure, not to mention attempt to succeed in. Coming from an environment described above, students handle these questions as best as they can, steer through the hidden messages it conveys, and may have a fading hope to evade this explosive and devastating mine field. Students start elementary school trying to navigate through the maze of pros and cons of wanting to be (and desperately trying to

be) productive citizens in society, while at the same time wondering about its definition. Students try many times not to cave under the mounting social pressures while the desire to achieve more academically dwindles. Minority students suffer from social pressures that may result in mental health concerns that oftentimes are unique to their environment (Davis, 2012). Ultimately, a young person stops trying to figure it out after a while and just go with the ebb and flow of life, with the pulse of the community.

Many students end up contributing to the record highs of the 21st century mass incarceration of African American men and people of color. Alexander (2010) explains that more African American adults are under correctional control today, in prison or jail, on probation or parole, than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began. A policy of mass incarceration, one that rejects the value of rehabilitation and views crime and punishment through a distorted racial lens, has locked away more people than at any other time in this nation's history (Rule & Rule, 2010).

In a 2010 *California Law Review* article, one in every 31 adults in the United States is in prison or on parole or probation; categorized by race, that is one in every 11 African Americans, one in 27 Latinos, and one in 45 whites (Pew Center on the States, 2009). The most plausible explanations for the rapid rise of imprisoned black men include hostile response to the Civil Rights Movement, racialized political rhetoric resulting in unfair and racist sentencing legislation and guidelines which is indicated by the rise of mass incarceration of African Americans and people of color. Moreover, racial disparities in education, jobs and social practices all add to African American's presence in America's booming prison population. According to a 2003 Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics report, the likelihood of African American males going to

prison in their lifetime totaled 32.2% compared to Hispanics at 17.2% and to whites at 5.9% (retrieved, September, 2011).

A study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics on reentry trends in the United States provides national recidivism rates. The Bureau of Justice Statistics defines recidivism as criminal acts that result in the re-arrest, re-conviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three year period following the prisoner's release. The recidivism study conducted in 2002 tracked 272,111 prisoners released from prison in 15 states in 1994. It estimated that within three years after release, 51.8% of prisoners released during the year were back in prison either because of a new crime for which they received another prison sentence, or because of a technical violation of their parole. With mounting odds for imprisonment, release, re-arrest, re-conviction, re-sentence and return to prison, this study urgently seeks to gain a richer understanding of this phenomenon.

The United States is the land of the imprisoned (Rule & Rule, 2010). Correspondingly, the United States is the world's warden, incarcerating a larger proportion of its people than any other country (Gottschalk, 2011). The crisis of African American male incarceration is monumental and near genocidal proportion in the United States. African Americans make up 13.6% of the U.S. population. African American *males* make up 6% of the U.S. population, yet they constitute 35% of America's prison population (Sobol, West, Cooper, 2009).

Were this any other segment of the U.S. population, it would be deemed a national crisis worthy of a national strategy to reverse this trend. This crisis continually threatens the very fabric of the black family contributing heavily to disproportionate numbers of black families headed by females (datacenter.kidscount.org); sky rocketing

rates of AIDS and HIV infection (Centers for Disease Control, 2010); disproportionate rates of poverty (US Census Bureau); juvenile delinquency (U.S. Department of Justice); school dropout rates (National Center for Educational Statistics); and other social and community ills.

Paradoxically, the election of the United States first African American president in 2008, Barack Obama, did little to suppress this rising surge towards imprisonment, as whole communities of color are imprisoned, including the families left behind by the current quasi-genocidal model of mass incarceration. While the impact of incarceration on individuals can be quantified to a certain extent, the wide-ranging effects of the race to incarcerate African American communities in particular has only begun to be investigated (Mauer, 2006). The importance of this study is to illustrate how a handful of formerly incarcerated men have persevered despite tremendous odds predicting their demise.

Significance of the Study

Alexander (2010) stated that at the turn of the 21st century, more than two million people found themselves behind bars and millions more were relegated to the margins of mainstream society where discrimination in employment, housing, and access to education was perfectly legal, and where they could be denied the right to vote. Ninety percent of those admitted to prison for drug offenses were black and Latino, yet the mass incarceration of communities of color was explained in race-neutral terms, an adaptation to the needs and demands of the current political climate. Those who are locked away in America's prison system are trapped within the Prison Industrial Complex (Smith & Hattery, 2010).

In working with the incarcerated population, I witness firsthand the effects of confinement and inhumane treatment on a person. First-time drug offenders need substance abuse treatment, not punitive confinement. Diversionary programs should be available and accessible for low-level and low-risk offenders. Imprisonment should not be the first option as a response to crime. Mass incarceration is at an all-time high (Loury, 2010; Western, 2007; Western & Wildeman, 2009). Consequently, with this rapid growth, the imprisonment of whole communities of color has been suffering dramatically (Clear, 2007). This is a dangerous trend and must be reversed. Politicians who use crime as a weapon to pander to their constituents is an age-old tactic that has proven results (Patterson, 2008; Tonry, 1999; Sturr, 2006). These results continue to destroy and devastate whole communities from joblessness, to educational inequities, to housing, to family breakdowns, to finally, hopelessness (Clear, 2007; Gust, 2012; Sampson & Loeffler, 2010).

Another part of the expected social embodiment of imprisonment is the lack of resistance to the structures in place that play a huge part in the hopelessness. When the consistent, quietly omnipresent (Lawrence, 1990), allocation of resources that confers special advantages on one racial group (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, in Taylor & Clark, 2009), is married to discriminatory practices embedded in commanding social norms, e.g. laws (Chambers, 2011), then institutional racism thrives. The concept of institutional racism first appeared in the writings of US black political activists Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in *Black Power* (1967). It is argued in these writings that institutional racism was deeply imbedded in established conventions in US society, which relied on anti-black attitudes of inferiority, even if individual whites did not themselves

discriminate against individual blacks. These structures hinder the wellbeing of a race of people. It is perpetuated in different forms, names and processes. Operating behind many faces, some particularly relevant forms of institutional racism are criminal justice racism, political racism and educational racism.

Criminal Justice Racism

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 (US Library of Congress) signed into law for mandatory minimum sentencing for distribution of cocaine, with far more serious punishment for the distribution of crack cocaine than powder cocaine. This was officially named the “War on Drugs” (Atkinson, Vaughn, et al, 2009; Schoenfeld, 2012; “Race and the War on Drugs”, 2009). Possession of five grams of crack cocaine carried a five year sentence whereas 500 grams of cocaine were required for a five year sentence (The Sentencing Project, 2010). This is the crux of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 signed into law by President Ronald Reagan mandating minimum sentencing for drug offenses. With the most controversial aspect of the guidelines being the five grams of crack compared to the 500 grams of cocaine, the rationale was that crack was more addictive than cocaine and was devastating the inner cities. While the guidelines purported to take race out of the equation because the focus was on the offense rather than the offender, they have resulted in disproportionate outcomes negatively affecting minorities, specifically African Americans and Hispanics (Chambers, 2011). Such institutional racism, morally wrong and psychologically crippling, normalizes imprisonment in the minds of minorities.

The march that Anderson talked about in *The Code of the Street*, has not missed a beat. The United States Department of Justice reports that African Americans make up

13.6% of the U.S. population. African American males make up 6% of the U.S. population but African American males make up 35% of America's prison population. Miller & Garran (2007) states when people of color number one-third of the population but make up three-quarters of the prison population, there is something terribly amiss. Furthermore, Miller and Garran says that when African Americans make up the majority of death row inmates, an appalling caricature of justice is enacted in the name of all U.S. citizens.

Educational Racism

Operating unquestioned through normative procedures and practices in daily decisions-making (Lucal, 1996), educational racism manifested more openly despite the determined efforts following the Supreme Court's *Brown v Board of Education* decision in 1954 to desegregate schools. Schools are primarily funded by property taxes, with additional aid from states and federal government. Thus, the wealthiest communities, which are predominantly white, typically spend more per capita per pupil (Miller & Garran, 2007).

In his 1991 book, *Savage Inequalities*, Johnathan Kozol observed that poor students were taught in unsafe, overcrowded, and decrepit buildings. They did not have enough school supplies and did not have access to technology. Their schools were less able to attract and retain qualified teachers. For Rothstein, (2004) affluent parents have not been proven to champion policy or practice modifications that shift resources away from their own children to children of color. When such modifications are mandated, wealthy parents exit the school or district taking their wealth with them (Hayward, 1999).

Other examples of educational racism include consistently assigning students of color to schools in dilapidated conditions (Books, 1999, in Taylor & Clark, 2009); assigning teachers with low expectations for student achievement (Anderson, 2001, in Taylor & Clark, 2009); and permitting teaching that offers few opportunities to use complex thinking skills (Hayward, 1999). Guidance counselors in predominantly white, middle-class school districts not only expect and encourage greater college attendance among their students than do their counterparts in poor school districts of color, but have more experience in navigating the application process and many more contacts in college admissions offices to boost their students' chances of admission (Miller & Garran, 2007).

Students of color are expected to accept such circumstances, adapt to instructional styles that are insensitive to their learning patterns (Scheurich & Young, 1997, in Taylor & Clark, 2009), and to learn from uncertified, inexperienced, and/or incompetent teachers (Necochea & Cline, 1996, in Taylor & Clark, 2009). Moreover, black and Hispanic students are punished with out-of-school suspensions at a higher rate than white students and for less serious infractions (Cartledge, Tillman, & Johnson, 2001, in Taylor & Clark, 2009). Teachers and administrators place targeted students on the school-to-prison pipeline which help perpetuates the rise of mass incarceration of minority males.

Situating the Study

Perhaps no one is better suited than ex-prisoners to offer insight into beneficial school change, useful re-entry programs, helpful identity conceptions and criminal desistance. Visher & O'Connell's (2012) study expands the emerging literature on offenders' self-perceptions by exploring prisoners' self-perceptions as they are preparing to leave prison and return to the community. Their data was derived from self-report

surveys and interviews of 800 men and women preparing to leave prison in three states. Their conclusions indicated that family support, having children, and in-prison substance abuse treatment increase optimism. Their study also suggests that correctional policies that facilitate family support and offer substance abuse treatment during confinement appear to be an increasing optimism among men and women returning to the community.

Additionally, another presents findings of a qualitative exploration of prisoners' perspectives on ideal schools. Using phenomenology as a research method, Carr-Chellman, Beabout, et al (2009), asked currently incarcerated prisoners the questions: what is the nature of prisoners' schooling experience? From their vantage point, how might schools be improved? And, from their perspective, what does an ideal educational system look like? Using in-depth, semi-structured and iterative interviews, the authors discovered a disconcerting inability of the subjects to respond to the questions outside of the carceral paradigm; a condition the authors deemed the perestroika problem, which indicates that one is out of practice in exercising freedom. This lack of imagination, this paucity of visions, frustrates the ability to propose something dramatically different. Carr-Chellman, et al (2009) findings suggested that their participants were unable to move beyond what may in some cases seem mundane in their initial thoughts for new schools. Their findings indicated that their participants told them that schools should be more like, rather than less like, prisons – with uniforms, strict anti-violence rules, metal detectors, and more structure, hence, the perestroika problem.

In a psychological study, Aresti, Eatough & Brooks-Gordon (2010) explored ex-offenders' personal experience of self-change, both generally and in terms of identity. For their study, five male ex-offenders participated in semi-structured interviews and the

data was subjected to an interpretative phenomenological analysis. The findings suggest that criminal desistance involves a shift to a pro-social identity and that self-change was a positive experience. By specifically focusing on the reformed ex-prisoners' experiences of employment/career opportunities, within the context of self-change, the authors were able to extricate ways in which the participants were desistance to crime.

By listening to the collective voices of participants who are caught in the cycle of being "othered" by hostility, political rhetoric, criminal racism, and educational racism, one perceives the contingency of the situation; men of color are persistently devoured by a carceral system with an insatiable appetite, and the situation is entirely avoidable. The mass incarceration of the minority male is a form of centuries-old institutional racism inextricably connected to a racist hegemony comprised of the all too familiar structures such as politics, education, public policies, and communities. Hegemony was used to homogenize people groups through coercive and consensual assimilation.

The academic achievement of African American and Latino American students in the U.S. is an ongoing and unresolved concern for counselors and educators (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, in Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010). The disproportionate underachievement of these student populations is evident in a multitude of educational measures, including scores on national achievement tests (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007), graduation rates (Orfield, et al, 2004) and placement in low-ability special education programs (Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, 2002). Hegemonic educational experiences that hinder achievement can result in disengagement from school, deviant behaviors, fewer opportunities in life, and difficulty earning a living wage (Midgette & Glenn, 1993, in Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2010).

There has been an enormous amount of scholarly interest in the life and works of Antonio Gramsci and his concept of hegemony in the second half of the twentieth century, in particular his extraordinary output while detained in Mussolini's prisons from 1926 until his death in 1937. In that period, Gramsci wrote 32 notebooks containing more than 3,000 handwritten pages; the famous *Prison Notebooks*, which were to have a deep impact on Italy, and, later internationally. Throughout the pages of *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci worked out concepts of hegemony and consent, political and civil society, popular literature, folklore, subaltern social groups, etc., together with a considerable effort devoted to the definition and analysis of intellectuals and their role in society (Nieto-Galan, 2011).

Hegemony was the result of Gramsci's reluctance towards deterministic explanations for social inequalities, and the limitations of any socio-economic reductionism to explain the political character of Western Europe. In his view, social control of the state through law, police, army, prisons, mainly through official force and violence, is insufficient to understand social stability. This political stability had to be explained by other factors, further physical coercion and repression. Therefore, Gramsci continued (Nieto-Galan, 2011), hegemony brought to the fore how the so called civil society with its institutions ranging from education, religion, and family to the microstructures of everyday practices, contributed to the production of meaning and values, which direct and maintain the spontaneous consent to the various strata of society.

Civil society was the sphere in which the dominant social group organized hegemony, but also the sphere for the counter-hegemony of a dominated group. Hegemony was a ruling tool for any class or group, an instrument for cultural, moral,

ideological leadership over subordinated groups, a prestige language, for example, that reinforced cultural influence and control over weaker linguistic communities. It was conceived as a dynamic force, a continuous process of formation. Therefore, hegemony changed in different times and places and was historically contingent (Nieto-Galan, 2011).

Conclusion

Studies combining a three-prong theoretical approach to understanding ex offender success after being released from prison are lacking. It is the goal of this study to add this body of research through multifaceted interpretation of interviews to illuminate the voices of those not often in the conversation of educational reform. My research question of how an ex offender, one that is male and African American, manages not to re-offend after release from prison, despite all insurmountable odds against him? The understanding of their perception operationalized through their growing up years, during prison and after prison experiences and interpretation provides a greater and wider perspective for instructive insight for educators.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe and discuss social learning theory, self-determination theory, and adult education theory as a means to inform behaviors of formerly incarcerated adult African American men. State departments of corrections all over the nation measure success of its population by releases from prison. If an ex-prisoner stays out for three years then their incarceration is considered a success. In an attempt to explain the phenomenon of staying out of prison when the recidivism rate is so high, the three theories will elucidate what the participants did differently to be considered a success.

By examining the three theoretical bodies of studies, it will offer possible answers to my research question of how African American males, despite all of the odds against them, manage not to re-offend and go back to prison. Each of three theories, social learning, self-determination, and adult education provide a prospective explanation for the participants' ability to survive or even thrive after leaving prison. Social learning theory is applied first to my participants since it is an early socialization theory. According to Bandura (1977) in social learning, people are neither driven by inner forces nor buffeted by environmental stimuli. Rather, psychological functioning is explained in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction of personal and environmental determinants (p. 11). This is particularly useful for my study as Akers (2010) said it places great emphasis on the capacity of humans to both influence and be influenced by their environment and through their interaction with others.

In keeping with a focus on the environment, Deci and Ryan (1985) were frontrunners in advancing self-motivation theory stating that it is based on the assumption that humans have an innate tendency for personal growth toward psychological interaction facilitated by the social-environmental facilitating factor to promote this tendency. Self-motivation theory is explained as people are motivated to behave, to learn by one of two motivational orientations: 1) intrinsic motivation (when one finds the content interesting); or 2) extrinsic motivation (learning as a means to an end). Self-motivation theory predicts that the absence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation results in the lack of motivation to learn (Deci & Ryan, 2010). The participants in my study indicate they may have traveled through one or both or neither of these motivations.

Being concerned with motivations to succeed, at some point in their lives, my participants underwent some sort of identity reconstruction process in that after early socialization and latent motivation, the idea to better themselves was prevalent. Adult education theory largely sheds light on this stage in their lives. Adult education theory (Knowles, 1970) entails the ongoing education of themselves whether by education, personality, emotional stability or within their peer groups. Knowles (1980) said the experience of the learner is the central dynamic of the learning process that is defined as the interaction between an individual and his environment.

Researchers have written about these three theories however, little research has been done using the combination of all three, applying them to formerly incarcerated African American men. This empirical study seeks to explicate how these theories work together in succession to answer the research question and for implications for educational insight.

Social Learning Theory

According to McNeil (in Khan & Cangemi, 2001), one of the most important tasks of the home in the early years of a child's life, and the school years, is to foster the development of appropriate behaviors. This essentially involves transmitting the culture of a society to a child and teaching the child behaviors appropriate for his sex and social class. In Rotter's 1954 work on social learning (in Kahn & Cangemi, 2001), he developed a social learning theory as an attempt to apply learning theory to complex social behavior of human beings. He referred to it as expectancy-reinforcement theory. For Kahn & Cangemi (2001), Rotter's is a social learning theory insofar as it stresses that major modes of behavior are learned in social situations and are inextricably fused with needs, requiring for their satisfaction the mediation of other persons.

Accordingly, Akers (2013) said the designation of social learning theory has been to refer to virtually any social behavioristic approach in social science, principally that of Albert Bandura and other psychologists (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Walters, 1963; Rotter 1954). Bandura (1977) posits that as a general perspective emphasizing reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral and environmental determinants, variants of social learning can be found in a number of areas in psychology and sociology (Akers, 2013). This social learning theory, advanced first by Burgess and Akers (1966) and then reformulated by Akers (1973) and then revised by Akers (1985) is a general theory that has been applied to a wide range of deviant and criminal behavior. For this study, I will be focusing on Akers' theory of social learning as it offers an explanation of crime and deviance that embraces variables that operate both to motivate and control criminal behavior, both to promote and undermine conformity (Akers, 2013).

The basic assumption in social learning theory is that the same learning process in a context of social structure, interaction, and situation, produces both conforming and deviant behavior. The difference lies in the direction of the balance of influences on behavior (Akers, 2013). Akers' development of the theory has relied principally on four major concepts: differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement, and imitation (Akers, 1985; Akers, 2003; Jennings & Akers, 2011). Akers' theory defined in the literature states the probability that persons will engage in criminal and deviant behavior is increased and the probability of their conforming to the norm is decreased when they differentially associate with others who commit criminal behavior and espouse definitions favorable to it, are relatively more exposed in-person or symbolically to salient criminal/deviant models, define it as desirable or justified in a situation discriminative for the behavior, and have received in the past and anticipate in the current or future situation relatively greater reward than punishment for the behavior (Akers, 2011).

Differential Association

According to Akers (2013), the differential association component of his social learning theory acknowledges and emphasizes the importance of the individuals/groups that an individual interacts with insofar as this interaction provides the social context wherein the social learning process operates. This element recognizes the effect that family members, intimate peer groups, and even secondary peer groups (including neighbors, churches, schoolteachers, law and authority figures) as well as virtual groups such as those established through mass media, the internet, cell phones, may have on an individual's participation or lack of participation in crime and deviance. Akers argues

that the more an individual is differentially associated with individuals who are involved in criminal and deviant behavior and/or differentially associated with individuals who espouse pro-criminal attitudes toward criminal and deviant behavior, the higher the likelihood for the individual to engage in the particular behavior that their associates are participating in or expressing pro-criminal definitions for (Jennings & Akers, 2011).

Definitions

The definitions component focuses on values, orientations, and attitudes toward criminal and/or deviant behavior. The range of these values, orientations, and attitudes shapes an individual's definitions toward certain behavior as being more right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesirable, justified or unjustified, appropriate or inappropriate, excusable or inexcusable. Jennings and Akers (2011) assert that these definitions can either be general or specific. General definitions refer to an individual's conventional, moral, and religious beliefs that are held for a variety of behaviors in a number of situations. Comparatively, Jennings and Akers (2011) said that specific definitions refer more to a person's attitudes of permissiveness or proscription toward a specific behavior or a specific behavior in a specific situation. Although general and specific definitions are described as conceptually distinct, it is important to note that these definitions are often intertwined and overlap. The concept of definitions is not proposed as either/or set of categories, rather, it is a continuum to which one may be more or less exposed by others and may personally internalize to a greater or lesser degree (Akers & Jennings, 2009).

Differential Reinforcement

Similar to the mechanism of differential association, Akers' second component (Jennings & Akers, 2011) differential reinforcement is an imbalance of norms, values, and attitudes favorable toward violations of law will increase an individual's likelihood for participating in a particular criminal or deviant act. This element emphasizes the effect that past, present, and future anticipated and/or experienced rewards and punishments have on whether an individual initiates their participation in a particular criminal or deviant act and whether or not the individual will continue their participation in the criminal or deviant act in the future. This differential reinforcement process operates in several ways: positive reinforcement (increase in status among a peer group as a result of participating in a particular criminal or deviant behavior), negative reinforcement (participation in a particular criminal or deviant behavior allows the individual to escape or avoid adverse stimuli or consequences), positive punishment (experiencing an unwanted punishment), and negative punishment (the removal of something valuable to an individual). Akers (2013) further elaborated by stating that the reinforcement process does not operate in the social environment in a simple either/or fashion. Rather, it operates according to a matching function in which the occurrence of, and changes in, each of several different behaviors correlate with the probability and amount of, and changes in, the balance of reward and punishment attached to each behavior (Herrnstein, 1961; Hamblin, 1979; Conger & Simons, 1995, in Akers, 2013).

Imitation

The final structure to Akers social learning theory is imitation. This involves the observation of behavior modeled by others and the consequences of the behavior

modeled by others. Akers (Jennings and Akers, 2011) argues that the characteristics of the models, the behavior itself, and the observed consequences of the observed behavior all have an effect on the likelihood of whether an individual will make a decision to imitate the observed behavior. Finally, while the social learning process in general and the imitation process in particular occur throughout an individual's life, Akers suggest that the process of imitation is likely to have the strongest effect on an individual's decision to perform the particular criminal or deviant act in the first place.

Self-Determination Theory

If you are from the environment of a harsh and uncaring educational system, poverty stricken neighborhoods, family breakdowns and lack of positive opportunities, how do you engage in the community and still politely coexist with neighbors knowing that the odds of becoming successful, by the dominant society's standards, i.e. graduate high school, college, career, marriage, children, home ownership, and own a pet, are highly stacked against you? Self-determination theory (SDT) begins with the assumption that people are by nature active, with an evolved tendency to engage the environment, assimilate new knowledge and skills, and integrate them into a coherent psychological structure (Reeve, Ryan, et al, in Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008). SDT maintains that integration is the process by which people acknowledge aspects of who they are and bring them into harmony with their values, emotions, identities, beliefs, and basic needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Ryan & Deci, 2008).

Integrating identities and experiences results in people having a coherent, though ever-changing sense of self. Through the integrative process, people become more self-regulated or volitional, acting consistently with their needs and interests and experiencing

higher well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1995). Some people, however, suppress or reject significant experiences and identities, with accompanying costs in wellness (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006). Current motivations determine whether or not an individual integrates a given experience (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When people are controlled, they are less likely to express and integrate experiences, whereas when autonomous, they are naturally inclined toward integration.

As a macro theory of human motivation, SDT addresses such basic issues as personality development, self-regulation, universal psychological needs, life goals and aspirations, energy and vitality, nonconscious processes, the relations of culture to motivation, affect, behavior, and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) holds that the account of the development of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has its initial formulation in organismic integration theory. The theory is based on the proposition that the needs for competence and self-determination motivate the ongoing process of elaborating the internal and external stimuli.

For Deci and Ryan (1985), with regard to the development of intrinsic motivation, it explains how one's undifferentiated interest and curiosity become channeled and elaborated as one's innate capacities interact with the environment. With regard to the development of extrinsic motivation, it suggests that one is inclined to internalize and eventually to integrate extrinsic regulations that are useful for effective, self-determined functioning.

The authors contend that motivation theories are built on a set of assumptions about the nature of people and about the factors that give impetus to action. These assumptions, and the theories that follow them, can be viewed as falling along a

descriptive continuum ranging from mechanistic to the organismic. Mechanistic theories tend to view the human organism as passive, that is being pushed around by the interaction of physiological drives and environmental stimuli, whereas organismic theories tend to view the organism as active, that is, being volitional and initiating behaviors.

According to the latter perspective, for Deci and Ryan (1985), organisms have intrinsic needs and physiological drives, and these intrinsic needs provide energy for the organisms to act on rather than simply to be reactive to the environment and to manage aspect of their drives and emotions. The active-organisms view and treat stimuli not as causes of behavior, but as affordances or opportunities that the organisms can utilize in satisfying its needs. When theories are based on the assumption of an active organism, they give primacy to the structure of people's experience, and are concerned more with the psychological meaning of stimuli than with the objective characteristics of those stimuli.

Deci and Ryan (1985) suggest that, by the 1950's, empirical and psychoanalytic traditions accepted that independent, non-drive-based energies motivate much activity; and in this they follow R.W. White's seminal work of 1959, *Motivation Reconsidered: The Concept of Competence*, a study of effectance motivation, which is an innate, intrinsic energy source that motivates a wide variety of behaviors (Wehmeyer, 2003) and is central to much of a child's development. In effectance motivation, White used the concept of an independent ego energy to reinterpret Freud's theory of psychosexual development, highlighting the joint contributions of the sexual drive and effectance motivation. He demonstrated that the inclusion of the effectance motivation would

provide a more satisfactory account of the child's striving to master each of the critical conflicts in its early life (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Deci and Ryan posits that within empirical psychology, White's landmark paper in 1959 required a dramatic reformulation of motivation theory, because a full explication of his hypothesis necessitates an active-organism, teleological perspective rather than a passive-organism, mechanistic perspective. White said that there is inherent satisfaction in exercising and extending ones' capabilities and referred to the energy behind the activity as effectance motivation and to the corresponding affect as a feeling of efficacy. White used the word competence to connote the structures through which effectance motivation operates.

Competence is the accumulated result of one's interactions with the environment, of one's exploration, learning, and adaptation. For Deci and Ryan (1985), in the broad, biological sense, competence refers to the capacity for effective interactions with the environment that ensure the organism's maintenance. According to White (in Deci & Ryan, 1985), the development of competencies – walking, talking, manipulating abstract symbols, or formulating a story – are in part maturational, yet they are in large measure learned, and the learning is motivated. The need for competence provides the energy for this learning. Effectance motivation is broader in its scope than learning. Whereas the biological aim of competence provides motivation is survival of the organism, the experiential aim is the feeling of competence that results from effective action. For Deci and Ryan (1985), the reward for competency-motivated behavior is the inherent feeling of competence that results from effective functioning, yet motivation is such that the feelings seem to result only when there is some continual stretching of one's capacities.

With each new acquisition of a skill there is some room for playful exercising of that skill, but boredom soon sets in when one merely exercises the same skill over and over. For White (in Deci & Ryan, 1985), effectance motivation is not intense and immediate like thirst or fear, but rather is an ongoing process that is periodically interrupted by tissue needs, though of course there are times when a hungry, cold, or pained person will stick to an intrinsically motivated activity in spite of tissue needs. White located this non-drive-based energy in the central nervous system of the organism.

Deci (in Deci & Ryan, 1985) suggested that the need for competence leads people to seek and conquer challenges that are optimal for their capacities, and the competence acquisition results from interacting with stimuli that are challenging. Deci and Ryan's (1985) theory has received increasing attention as a motivational construct (Stavrou, in Olsson, 2008). SDT states that human motivation varies along a continuum from a self-determined or autonomous to a more controlled one. Guiffrida (2006), quoted Deci and Ryan (1991) in explaining SDT as people are motivated to behave, to learn by one of two motivational orientations: 1) intrinsic motivation, or learning because one finds the content interesting; or 2) extrinsic motivation, learning as a means to an end (i.e. grades, praise, pay). SDT operates in that the absence of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation results in lack of motivation to learn, a condition which Deci and Ryan refer to as amotivation. SDT is primarily based on the premise that the fulfillment of intrinsic needs is more important to personal growth and learning than the fulfillment of extrinsic needs. Therefore, the theory concludes that the most meaningful and successful learning occurs when students are motivated intrinsically, (in Guiffrida, 2006). SDT is being used here to

help explain behaviors of formerly incarcerated adult African American men who have not re-offended in three years after release from prison.

Citing Deci and Ryan's 1991 work, Guiffrida (2006), said intrinsic motivation for learning has three primary components. The first component is the need for autonomy, which occurs when students choose, on their own to become engaged in learning because the subject and activities are closely aligned to students' interests and values (in Guiffrida, 2006). The second component requisite to intrinsic motivation is competence, or the need to be effective in interaction with the environment. In addition to asserting one's effectiveness, competence also recognized the learner's need to test, challenge, and develop in new ways. The third component is relatedness, or the need to establish close, secure relationships with others.

SDT also delineates three forms of extrinsic motivation (in Guiffrida, 2006). The first form is considered the least effective form of extrinsic motivation, external regulation, which occurs when students are motivated purely by rewards and punishments from outside sources. A second form of extrinsic motivation, introjected regulation, occurs when students who are more motivated by rewards and punishments began to partially internalize this external pressure to learn. Identified regulation, the third form, occurs when the student internalizes the externalized pressure to learn. While research has indicated that both external and introjected regulation negatively impacts learning, identified regulation can have a positive impact on learning, especially when the learner considers the material important but uninteresting.

Another important SDT element is the recognition of how external events support or hinder intrinsic motivation. According to Reeve, Deci & Ryan's 2004 work on SDT

(in Guiffrida, 2006) the authors cited extensive research concluding that controlling behaviors on the part of teachers or parents, such as surveillance, threats of punishment, imposed goals, competition, and evaluation, all serve to undermine students' intrinsic motivation toward learning. This line of research has also found that parents and teachers who provoke students with choices, opportunities for self-direction, rationales, acknowledgement of feelings, and positive feedback increase students' intrinsic motivation toward learning.

Adult Education Theory

Most of the participants in this study are undergoing some sort of identity reconstruction process. Malcolm Knowles (1970) said it entails the ongoing education of themselves whether by education, personality, emotional stability or within in their peer groups. They are lifelong learners. Knowles introduced the concept of andragogy which he defined as the art and science of helping adults learn. He compared andragogy with pedagogy – the art and science of teaching children – which was the traditional teaching method for all learners, regardless of age, prior experience, or developmental level. Knowles identified four primary assumptions about the characteristics of the adult learner, contending that as adults they:

- Become increasingly independent and self-directing;
- Accumulate experience which becomes a resource for learning;
- Orient their formal and informal learning around developmental tasks of their social and work roles;
- Orient their learning toward performance rather than subject.

Knowles (1970) theorized that, if given the opportunity, adults prefer to be active participants in all phases of the learning process and that self-directed learning provides this opportunity, encouraging adults to become pro-active, lifelong learners. He alleged that the process of applying andragogical assumptions, theory and principles in total programs as well as individuals learning activities involves the following process:

- Establishment of a climate conducive to adult learning;
- The creation of an organizational structure for participative planning;
- The diagnosis of needs for learning;
- The formulation of directions of learning (objectives);
- The operation of the activities;
- The re-diagnosis of needs for learning (evaluation).

There can be little doubt that such an approach applies equally to the peculiar social situation of African Americans. After all, Anna Julia Cooper (Johnson, 2009) devoted much of her life to the education and empowerment of African American youth and adults through much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Cooper's theory and praxis of education contested the prevailing discourse regarding how African Americans should be educated by offering alternative options for educating this disenfranchised group (Johnson, 2009).

According to Knowles (1970), adult education is a providing the theoretical framework for lifelong education. The traditional theories of learning, both behaviorist and cognitive, only explain how to instruct, not how to facilitate lifelong learning. Knowles posits that lifelong education requires a new theory that takes into account physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and occupational development through the

life span, that explains learning as a process of inquiry and illuminates the competencies necessary to engage in this process, and that provides guidelines for performance of the new roles (for example, facilitators, resource persons, information managers) required to facilitate that process.

Conversely, Billington (2007) concurred with Knowles' theory by developing a list of seven characteristics for adult education from her own research and based on Knowles' findings.

- 1). Students feel safe and supported. There is a learning environment in which individual needs and uniqueness are honored, where abilities and achievements are acknowledged and respected.
- 2). Intellectual freedom is fostered, and experimentation and creativity are encouraged.
- 3). Faculty treat adult students as peers — respected as intelligent, experienced adults. Their opinions are listened to and appreciated.
- 4). Self-directed learning is the norm. Students take responsibility for their own learning. They work with faculty to design individual learning programs that address what each person needs and wants to learn in order to function optimally in his or her profession.
- 5). Optimal pacing challenges the learner. The ideal pacing for adult learners challenges people just beyond their present level of ability. If they are pushed too far beyond that level, people give up. If challenged too little, they become bored and learn little. Adults who reported experiencing high levels of intellectual stimulation — to the point of feeling discomfort — grew more.
- 6). Learners are actively involved in the learning experience, as opposed to passively listening to lectures. Students and instructors talk and interact, they try out new ideas in the workplace, and they use exercises and experiences to bolster facts and theory.
- 7). Regular feedback mechanisms are in place for students to tell faculty what works best for them and what they want and need to learn. And faculty pay attention: They listen and make changes based on student input.

Accordingly, (Knowles, 1970) said a basic element in the technology of andragogy is the involvement of the learner in the process of planning their own learning, with the teacher serving as a procedural guide and content source. Andragogy assumes that a teacher cannot really teach in the sense of make a person learn, but that one person can only help another person learn. Adults tend to have a perspective on immediacy of application toward most of their learning. Since learning is an internal process, it is described psychologically as a process of need-meeting and goal-striving by the learner. This is to say that an individual is motivated to engage in learning to the extent that he feels a need to learn and perceives a personal goal that learning will help achieve; and he will invest his energy in making use of available resources (including teachers and resources) to the extent that he perceives them as being relevant to his needs and goals (Knowles, 1970).

The central dynamic of the learning process is thus perceived to be the experience of the learner, experience being defined as the interaction between an individual and his environment. Knowles (1970) said the quality and amount of learning is therefore clearly influenced by the quality and amount of interaction between the learner and his environment and by the educative potency of the environment. Adult learners need to know why they are learning new knowledge before they are willing to participate. Adult students are encouraged to incorporate what they learn in the classroom into their everyday work lives. If adults are aware why they are learning new skills, there will be a readiness to learn and they will be more willing to participate in discussions in the classroom or learning context. Adult learners who have been given a second chance at education might be more motivated to learn than children or secondary school students

because they will be able to draw a connection between the material that is discussed in the classroom and what is happening in their own lives. Unlike children, adults tend to take responsibility for their own learning and they do not want to be directed by the lecturer during class (Knowles, 1970).

Knowles (1980) later revised his opinion that andragogy was exclusive to adult learning and alleged that the assumptions listed above were applicable to all learners and could apply to both models. He advocated that the situation determined which model was applicable, not whether the learner is a child or an adult. He expanded on his assumptions identified above and developed a comparison of characteristics of what he called the non-adult (dependent/student role) learner versus the adult (non-dependent/member role) learner (Cyr, 1999).

Even though Knowles (Knowles, Holton, et. al, 1998) was a keen advocate of the theory of andragogy he noted that pedagogical strategy is appropriate at least as a starting point (when learners are indeed dependent) when entering a totally strange content area (in McGrath, 2011). Andragogy, according to Henschke (1998) can be defined as a scientific discipline that studies everything related to learning and teaching which would bring adults to their full degree of humaneness. Andragogy is centered on the idea that the lecturer does not possess all the knowledge and that students are encouraged to participate in the classroom by utilizing their own experiences. Andragogy states that adults are motivated by both internal and external factors including the view that adults tend to be problem centered in their orientation (in McGrath, 2011).

Conclusion

Using these three theories to analyze and attempt to explain the phenomenon of formerly incarcerated adult African American men's success after release from prison, it is my hope to understand and contribute to best practices for educators from the findings of the data analysis. The ways in which the participants in the study grew up, survived prison and how they lived after prison will be explored as the tenets to inform the theories listed above. This study has the potential to offer excellent interpretations from the findings for explaining the phenomenon of how formerly incarcerated minority men somehow overcome the odds of re-offending and contributing to the recidivism statistics.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Chapter Three introduces the methodological framework for this study. The general idea, concept and approach of symbolic interaction, as well as how it is applied methodologically is addressed. The chapter begins with an introduction of symbolic interaction and then focuses on Mead's (1908/1909) seminal work on "I" and "Me" concepts to interpret and display the data of the participants engaging in continuous reformation.

Introduction

Symbolic interaction explains taking the role of other toward the self. I use symbolic interaction as a means to provide a theoretical lens and methodology for studying formerly incarcerated African American men and their self-educative efforts to survive and thrive after release from prison. The study answers the research question through semi-structured interviewing, clustering, coding, and thematizing while utilizing symbolic interactionism to guide the questioning and analysis of findings. From life experiences of formerly incarcerated men, I use vignettes of their life stories to help situate the study for a deeper and richer depiction of their life experience to show how the data is congruent with symbolic interactionism; and discuss my methods of data collection and the tools of research used to help analyze the data.

A Symbolic Interactionist Approach

According to Mead (in Manis & Meltzer, 1967), all group life is essentially a matter of cooperative behavior. Mead makes a distinction, however, between infrahuman society and human society. Insects – whose society most closely approximates the

complexity of human social life – act together in certain ways because of their biological make-up. Thus, their cooperative behavior is physiologically determined. For Mead, this is shown by many facts, among which is the fact of the fixity, the stability, of the relationships of insect-society members to one another. Insects, according to Mead's evidence, go on for countless generations without any difference in their patterns of associations. This picture of infrahuman society remains essentially valid as one ascends the scale of animal life, until we arrive at the human level (in Manis & Meltzer, 1967).

In the case of human association, Mead (1934/1967) continues, the situation is fundamentally different. The very diversity of the patterns of human group life clearly distinguishes it from the cooperative life of insects and the lower animals; the instability of human patterns disqualifies them as explanations of human association. Such cooperation can only be brought about by some process wherein: (a) each acting individual ascertains the intention of the acts of others, and then (b) makes his own response on the basis of that intention. For Mead, (1934/1967) what this means is that, in order for human beings to cooperate, there must be present some sort of mechanism whereby each acting individual: (a) can come to understand the lines of action of others, and (b) can guide his own behavior to fit in with those lines of action. Human behavior is not a matter of responding directly to the activities of others. Rather, it involves responding to the intentions of others, i.e., to the future, intended behavior of others – not merely to their present actions.

To use one of Mead's illustration as an example to further explain his theory (in Manis & Meltzer, 1967): Two hostile dogs, in the pre-fight stage, may go through an elaborate conversation of gestures (snarling, growling, baring fangs, walking stiff-

leggedly around one another). The dogs are adjusting themselves to one another by responding to one another's gestures. In this case, the response to a gesture is dictated by pre-established tendencies to respond in certain ways.

Each gesture leads to direct, immediate, automatic, and unreflecting response by the recipient of the gesture (the other dog). Neither dog responds to the intention of the gesture. Further, each dog does not make his gestures with the intent of eliciting certain responses in the other dog. Thus, animal interaction is devoid of conscious, deliberate meaning. Gestures at the non-human or non-linguistic level do not carry the connotation of conscious meaning or intent, but serve merely as cues for the appropriate responses of others. Gestural communication takes place immediately, without any interruption of the act without the mediation of a definition of meaning. Each organism adjusts instinctively to the other; it does not stop and figure out which response it will give. Its behavior is largely a series of direct automatic responses to stimuli.

For Mead, human beings, on the other hand, respond to one another on the basis of intentions or meanings of gestures. This renders the gestures symbolic, i.e., the gesture becomes a symbol to be interpreted; it becomes something which, in the imaginations of the participants, stands for the entire act. Thus, individual A begins an act, i.e. makes a gesture; for example, he draws back an arm. Individual B (who perceives the gesture) completes, or fills in the act in his imagination; i.e., B imaginatively projects the gesture into the future: "He will strike me." In other words, B perceives what the gesture stands for, thus getting its meaning. In contrast to the direct responses of the dogs, the human being inserts an interpretation between the gesture of another and his response to it. Human behavior involves responses to interpreted stimuli (Manis & Meltzer, 1967).

Extrapolating from Mead, McCall (2006) claims that symbolic interaction is fundamentally a theory of human nature. There are three core themes of symbolic interaction. The list below provides the definitions.

Axiom A: All humans share a common nature that is unique among all animals but obscured by human social differences.

Axiom B: Humans generally behave in socially proper ways.

Axiom C: Human conduct is self-regulated.

Postulate C-1: A person is a social animal.

Postulate C-2: Fundamental to society is communication.

Postulate C-3: Fundamental to person is mental life.

Postulate C-4: The key link between society and person is the looking glass self.

Postulate C-5: Self-regulation is a process.

Elaborating on Mead's views of social psychology, Kuhn (in Stone & Farberman, 1970) stated that Mead took the view that the individual is initially dependent on the antecedent existence of a social system, specifically as it exists in the ongoing process of a functioning language, for the means wherewith to engage in experience or to take any kind of self-conscious and self-directed action. Therefore, even though Mead did not use the expression symbolic interaction theory, it is nevertheless appropriate to regard him as the central figure in its development (McCall, 2006). Mead's student, Herbert Blumer, actually coined the expression symbolic interaction.

Mead's work on gesture, in which the earliest stages of an act call out in its beholders subsequent stages of that act, provides a concept that unifies the pragmatist theory of meaning with a social theory of mind. In Mead's view, according to McCall (2006), animals can signal their intentions only through gestures in just this sense, so that

the animal interactions amount to a “conversation of gestures.” Human actors, on the other hand, also employ another class of sign – the symbol – which evokes within them the same responses tendencies (meanings) that it evokes in beholders. This response in common serves to place actor and audience on the same footing, thus enabling the actor literally to “assume the role of the other toward oneself”. Humans act toward objects (including self) in terms of the meanings of those objects.

Symbolic interaction holds that humans construct and reconstruct themselves through continuous communication with others. For Cooley (1922), "Each to each, a looking-glass reflects the other that doth pass". But for Mead (1908/1909), a sociologist and Dewey (1908/1925), a philosopher, they see the “social situation [as] an organic whole in which both the individual and society are functional distinctions or two abstract phases of the same process” (in Odin, 1996).

A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. The comparison with a looking-glass hardly suggests the second element, the imagined judgment, which is quite essential. The thing that moves us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this imagination upon another’s mind....We always imagine, and in imagining share, the judgments of the other mind. (Cooley, 1902, in McCall, 2006)

Particularly relevant for positive community and identity development and subsequent restorative practices, Cooley holds that pride or shame are two important outcomes, the former contributing to a moral sense of self, the latter to self-effacement (Mead, 1908/1909). To Cooley, self is Person’s imagination of an idea of Other about Person, while Other is Person’s image of Other. Self-regulation is a process that has to be developed over time through participation in society. He stated that “man does not have

human nature at birth; he cannot acquire it except through fellowship, and it decays in isolation (Cooley, 1909, in McCall, 2006).

The use of symbols to communicate entails that the “other” here is not simply specific persons but instead the “generalized other,” thus transcending the actor’s imagination of how numerous specific persons might view one. Arguing that society is peopled by selves, Scottish moralist Adam Smith (in McCall, 2006), contended for the view during the 1700’s that society is primary and persons are secondary, rather than the other way around. He stated that people were socially constructed actors who are aware of their position in society. Smith argued that others serve the individual as a “social looking glass” (Cooley, 1902), a mirror reflecting to the actor how others are reacting to the actor’s doings and feelings – reflecting, that is, their moral judgments about the quality of the actor’s actions. Smith went on to provide a key link between society and the person: the “looking-glass self,” through which the individual acquires moral compass through internalizing the social looking glass. Smith said in his 1759 seminal work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (in McCall, 2006),

We suppose ourselves the spectators of our own behavior and endeavor to imagine what effect it would, in this light, produce upon us. This is the only looking-glass by which we can, in some measure, with the eyes of other people, scrutinize the propriety of our conduct.

Smith went on to postulate the existence of a divided self – one aspect inclined to execute particular actions, while a second aspect imagined how specific other humans would react to those actions:

When I endeavor to examine my own conduct, I divide myself, as it were, into two persons....The first is the spectator, whose sentiments with regard to my own conduct I endeavor to enter into, by placing myself in his situation, and by considering how it would appear to me, when seen from that particular point of view. The second is the agent, the person whom I

properly call myself....The first is the judge; the second the person judged of.

Like Smith, then, Mead, according to McCall (2006), supposed that the looking-glass self operates through individuals responding identically to something; for Smith, that something was the situation, while for Mead, it was the linguistic symbol. Smith's "seeing ourselves as others see us" and Mead's "taking the role of other toward the self" speaks to the many life experiences of formerly incarcerated adult men.

Within an environment such as a school, a prison, a neighborhood, a home, each communicator takes "the role of the other" to grasp "the meaning of signs, symbols gestures and indications" (Blumer & Morrione, 2004, p. 28). It is as therefore as "social beings" we become "moral beings" (Mead, in Ritzer, 2000, p. 385). In education this happens when "the school becomes organized as a social whole, and...the child recognizes his conduct as a reflection or formulation of that society" (Mead, 1908/1909, p. 328). Thus for disaffected students and educators, affirming each other encourages the "old self" to disintegrate and a new moral self to arrive (Mead, 1913).

The new "I" is a "creative response" to the symbolized structures of the "Me" (Mead, 1934/1967). Mead has designated the "Me" as those incorporated responses of other, to the beginning of one's own acts. Through these incorporated responses, others enter our world and influence our actions. He similarly designates the "I" as those responses of ours which come over against the implanted reactions of others to our own initial phases of action. Where the "Me" is the organization of attitudes of other which we incorporate, the "I" is our response to the attitudes of others. In full, self is what arises as a result of the dialogue between the "I" and the "Me." An individual is forever initiating action, then taking into consideration the attitudes of others to that action, and then

revising or altering that action in the light of those attitudes (Farberman & Perinbanayagam, 1985).

Relying a great deal on Mead's (1934/1967) "I" and "Me" ideas to understand and present the data growing out of an individual's constant restructuring, a person brings his "I," a symbolized object of consciousness, into every interaction. He reacts to another's perception of him ("Me") and changes accordingly (Mead, 1934/1967). My research question entails the ancillary questions: what did a formerly incarcerated African American male individual see in the eyes of teachers, administrators and people in positions of authority? What did he see in the eyes of society? And, lastly, what did he see in the eyes of prison guards? Through semi-structured interviews, using the clustering method to unearth memories, and data analysis to determine pattern and themes, I look at those symbolic interactions during the participants growing up years, surviving prison and after prison. Relationally, combining social learning theory, adult learning theory and self-determination theory to confirm or disconfirm their life experience will help inform current literature of this emerging population of ex prisoners' educational understanding.

Participants

Before conducting the interviews, I applied and received permission from the University of Oklahoma's Institutional Review Board (IRB). My participants responded to an advertisement asking for participants to be involved in my research study. The advertisement was placed in a community resource center in a Midwestern city. Respondents to the advertisement were varying in age and education level. The process for confidentiality is stressed during the first contact and is protected throughout the study with all names changed to a pseudonym. Signed letters of consent are secured

before beginning the interview process and participants are advised they can terminate their participation at any time, without fear of reprisal.

Research Participant Inclusion Criteria

The target participants are African American adult males between the ages of 18 and 60 who have experienced incarceration. They have been out of prison for three years or more, have not re-offended, have not been re-convicted, have not been re-sentenced and have not re-entered prison again. All of the participants will have responded to the recruitment advertisement and will volunteer to participate in the study. All of the participants indicate interest in speaking about their particular experiences and desire to participate in an in-depth interview along with the clustering exercise.

Research Participant Exclusion Criteria

For purposes of this study, participants were excluded if: 1). they decided not to participate and discuss their experiences; 2). they were considered a special population (e.g. children under 18 years of age, pregnant women, psychologically impaired, cognitively impaired, prisoners, or Native American tribes and/or tribal organizations, and elderly age 65 and older); and 3). They had a change of heart and mind during the process and no longer wanted to participate.

Reflexivity

In reflexivity, I am constantly aware, assessing, and reassessing my own contribution/influence/shaping of the intersubjective, i.e. the dialectical and constitutive relation of exchange and communication (Scholte, in Salzman, 2002). In research and the consequent research findings, greater knowledge is obtained through the use of the qualitative tools used to unearth rich data for this study. However, since I have family

members who are ex-prisoners, and since my participants are ex-prisoners, in order to ensure trustworthiness and to avoid tainting what data is being heard, capturing what the participants are saying and not what the researcher is hearing is the aim. The goal of reflexivity is for me to be always be aware of my subjectivity.

Semi-Structured Interviewing

The semi structured interviews are audio-taped to facilitate data analysis. In order to provide a context for each participant, one question encourages the participants to reflect upon life experiences and to talk generally about themselves. Follow up questions pursue memories regarding their early schooling, home life, community life and family relationships. Additionally, a clustering technique is used to delve deeper into their memories. Clustering is a nonlinear brainstorming process akin to free association (Rico, 2000). Rico (2000) suggest using a nucleus word or short phrase which acts as a stimulus for recording all the associations that spring to mind in a very brief period of time. This exercise included free word association from a nucleus word written in a circle on a sheet of paper. The interviews are transcribed and multi-layered interpretations are conducted.

Face-to-face interviews provide an excellent way of exploring complex feelings and attitudes. It allows the researcher to pursue half-answered questions and to encourage thorough and detailed responses. Additionally, face-to-face contact allows for observation of general appearance, overall health, personality, nonverbal behavior, and other individual characteristics (Sommer & Sommer, 2002). The semi-structured interview, valued for its accommodation to a range of research tools, typically reflects variation in its use of questions, prompts, and accompanying tools and resources to draw the participant more fully into the topic under study (Galletta, 2013). Semi-structured

interviews incorporate both open-ended and more theoretically driven questions, eliciting data grounded in the experience of the participant as well as data guided by existing constructs on the particular discipline within which one is conducting research (Galletta, 2013). The aim of semi-structure interviewing is to gain insight into how people attribute meaning to their worlds in social interaction (Grindsted, 2005).

Interviewing varies in terms of a priori structure and in the latitude the interviewee has in responding to questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Patton (2002) puts interviews into three general categories: the informal, conversational interview; the general interview guide approach; and the standardized, open-ended interview. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses. This method is based on an assumption fundamental to qualitative research: The participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

In some cases, even the manner in which they are asked varies, for example, changing the wording or sentence structure to better fit the respondent or the situation. This arrangement may be more suitable for obtaining in-depth information where the interviewer does not want to be restricted by a prescribed question order but would like advantage of having asked the same questions of all respondents (Sommer & Sommer, 2002).

An interview gives people the opportunity to tell their story in their own words. It can provide a release for pent-up feelings and can be empowering as it recognizes people as experts in their own experiences. Ways in which to conduct in-depth interviews

include unstructured interviews in which the main goals are to explore all the alternatives in order to pick up information; structured interviews are used when the questions are formulated beforehand and asked in a set order and in a specified manner. This is used when the information from a number of respondents is to be combined. Semi-structured interview are used when all the respondents are asked the same questions, but the order in which they are asked differs from one person to the next (Sommer & Sommer, 2002).

Clustering

A major intention in relation to data collection is to allow each participant to express in his own terms what the experience of growing up, surviving prison and after prison was like for them. After much consideration, I decide to use an emerging data-gathering tool for research called the clustering method. To facilitate an individual telling his own story, and in order to facilitate non-stereotypic, conscious and non-conscious material, each participant was coached to participate in a pen and paper exercise (Karpiak, 1990).

Clustering is a unique tool developed in creative writing by Rico (1983). Rico describes the method as a nonlinear brainstorming process, similar to free association. Ideas radiate from a nucleus word or phrase and ideas expand and connect. For Carney (1992), clustering helps put difficult-to-verbalize feelings into words. For this study, clustering appears to be the best avenue in order for me to generate a wide range of memories, feelings, images, and associations.

Use of semi-structured interviews and clustering are the two methods that I have chosen to collect and analyze interview data. Both are congruent with symbolic interaction in that the information gathered from these methods works collaboratively

with the uncovering of sensitive and important thoughts, feelings, and emotions that will emerge from my participants which will help inform best practices for educators.

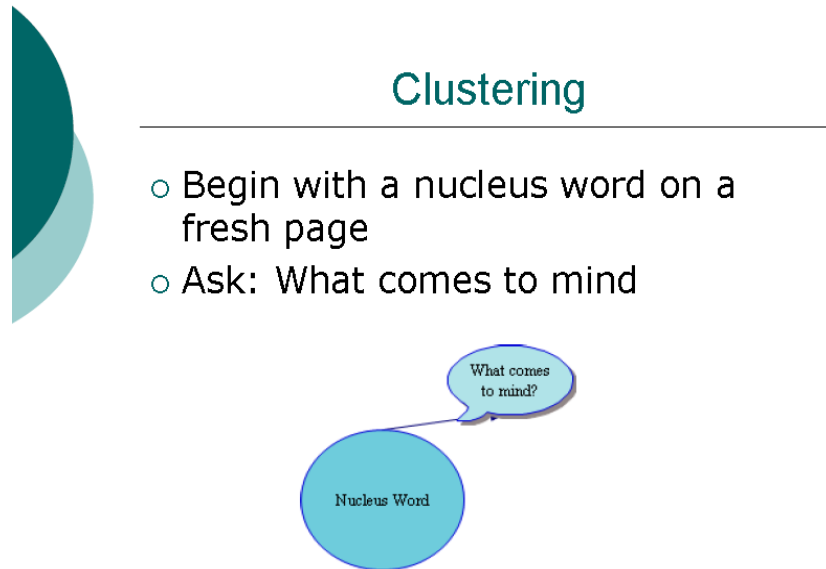


Figure 1: Nucleus Word [Karpiak, 2008]

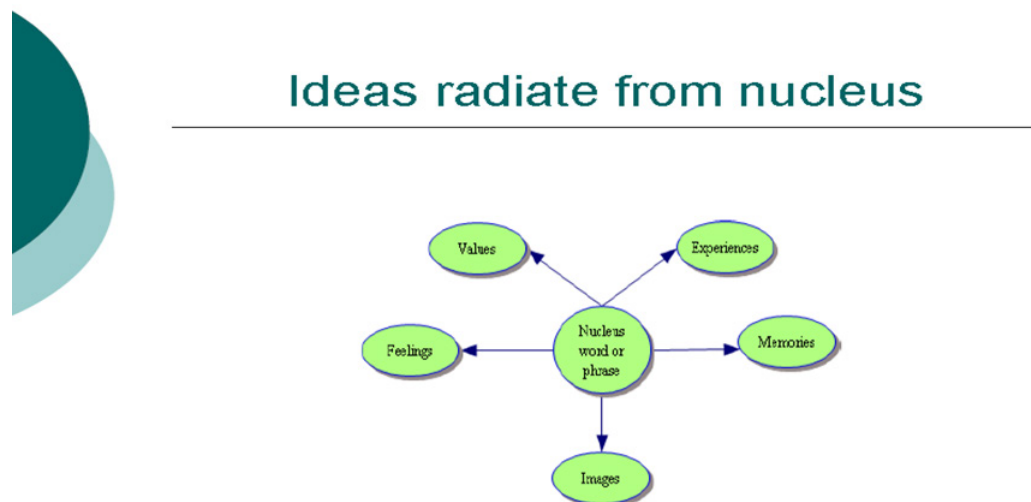


Figure 2: Ideas Radiate [Karpiak, 2008]

Semi-structured interviewing aided by the clustering method provides the discourse for the unfettered sharing of the experiences before prison, during prison and after prison. In addition, the queries probe questions and requests for information, such as, “Describe your home life when you were in school. Describe what it was like to receive prison visits. Which family members, teachers or role models encouraged you? During the clustering activity, rich and deeper data is unearthed to shed more light on highly sensitive and personal information in which I look for the symbolic “I” to “Me” interactions in each of the themes.

These approaches supply an insightful tool to unearth the meaning and significance of the experiences, which provides further element of understanding, especially when I am able to move back and forth sharing and reflecting (i.e. researcher reflexivity, Graber, 2004) on my experiences with the trend as well.



Ideas expand & connect

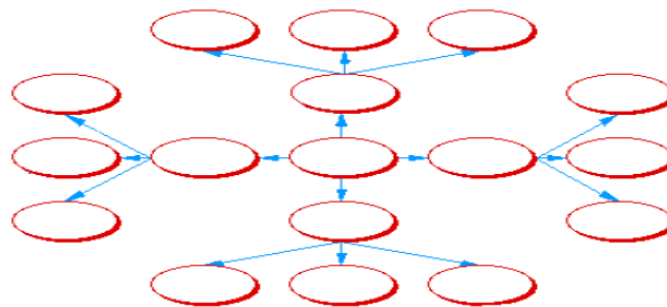


Figure 3: Ideas Expand [Karpiak, 2008]

Distribution of something familiar with the participants may provide a circle of trustworthiness, which may allow them to reveal more of their experiences. There may be sensitive information that a participant will feel comfortable discussing if they believe I can relate, empathize, or sympathize with them.

Data Analysis

I reviewed the transcribed interviews, teasing out important exchanges that specify the participants' individualities and dialectical self-perceptions (Patton, 1980). They came to school with only splintered notions of self. Throughout their young lives, they bounced around living with extended family members. In most of the school settings, the majority of the schoolchildren were just like them: lived in poverty, sense of self defined through clothes and shoes, who was the most popular with the girls, who was the toughest, and who was the poorest on the poverty totem pole. Their socially-constructed selves longed for a secure connection "with others in the environment" and an experience of themselves "as worthy of love and respect (Osterman, 2000, p. 325). I compared my interview codes (Patton, 1980) and discovered that there were five main themes of my participants' key transformations: *resilience, family, faith, autonomy, and identity change*. However, similar to Carr-Chellman et al.'s (2009) prisoners, my participants sometimes yearned for or considered a concerned teacher who might have guided them through a personal or situational episode.

I combed through all the transcribed interviews grouping all the "I"/"Me" (Mead, 1934/1967) evolutions that were sandwiched between the theme threads of *resilience, family, faith, autonomy and identity change*. These themes are laced throughout the vignettes in Chapter Four. Additionally, after conducting the clustering exercise with my

participants, I employed Rico's (2000) three-tiered model in which the participants' voice were analyzed through the monologic voice (the "I" search), the dialogic voice (the "you" search), and the multi-logic voice (the "we" search). They passed through each of these phases during the exercise in which more subthemes were unearthed leading to a deeper understanding of their identity transformation. Thus, in answer to the research question, many of the participants underwent an identity reconstruction process (Haney, Thomas, & Vaughn, 2011).

The writing process consisted of countless iterations as my research question was answered by the emerging data. I referred to Patton (1980) during the examination of interview transcripts as the foundation on an inductive approach targeted to identifying patterns in the data to identify thematic codes. "Inductive analysis means that patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (p. 306). I italicize the theme threads throughout the study.

Conclusion

This study calls for semi-structured interviewing, clustering exercise, and data analysis consisting of coding and theming to isolate thematic statements into categories. Because I have family members who have experienced the ex-prisoner phenomenon, I give particular attention to trustworthiness at each step in the investigative process. Guided by my dissertation chair, Courtney Vaughn, I am provided with the direction needed to maintain focus during research question formation. Additionally, objective review of semi-structured interview queries and probes and synthesizing data through isolating thematic statements assist in exposing any researcher reflexivity.

CHAPTER FOUR

Symbolic Interaction Narratives: Presentation of Findings

Introduction

After reviewing the participants' reflections, and using clustering to unearth the meaning of their life experiences as they relate to the methodological focus on symbolic interactionism, specifically to the "I" to "Me" (Mead, 1934/1967), the connectedness of understanding and events emerged. Subsequently, streams of connections intertwined throughout the discourses have emerged. The three theories of social learning, self-determination, and adult education are combined and used as the theoretical framework in which themes of *family, autonomy, faith, resilience, and identity change* are italicized as they appear in the transcriptions via the vignettes. All interviews are evidenced by three to four themes and the majority of the participants evidenced three. I developed sub-categories from all of the themes and reflect participant viewpoints of their voluntary and involuntary determination to succeed. Their actions represented the three learning theories of social learning, self-determination, and adult education; and are somewhat reflected in the sub-themes of independence, education, employment, purpose, pride, provide for family, goal setting, confidence, and happiness.

Vignettes

Doug

Doug was 38 years old at the time of this interview. He now considers himself to be a *hard worker, a loving father* and an energetic man. When describing his growing up years at home, he used the words "incomplete, uncertainty, endless hope, despair, *no identity*, not able to please, death, and *religious*." He lived in three different houses. His

parents divorced when he was a pre-teen and they shared parenting duties, along with his maternal grandmother. Doug would live sporadically at all three houses. Life at his mother's house was strict, and Doug felt that his mother blamed him for misfortunes in her life including financial and emotional stress. They had a rocky relationship and he did not like any of her boyfriends. He said she kept a .38 pistol and if he got out of line, he feared for his life in her home. He moved in permanently with his father when he was 11. *His relationship with his father was "awesome."* He said his father was strict but more laid back and they would talk about life lessons and school lessons. Doug was the youngest of his mother's biological children and when he was born, they were starting their own families and moving out. Doug was not close to any of his father's other children.

Nevertheless, Doug loved his early schooling years. He said that looking back, he thought he was hyperactive but could learn very fast and figure out letters, shapes and sounds real quick. However, he would get bored and move along to other things. When behavior issues started, the teachers and administrators did not know how to address them. When asked about his favorite subjects in school, Doug said he really liked social studies, mathematics, music, playing in the bands, and playing sports. He said his favorite teacher was the band director because the band director "grilled us academically and musically as well." Doug said that this teacher would check on him in class, after school, and would ask how things were going. Doug said that the band director was more involved in his life than any other teacher. He said that "teaching was just not a paycheck for him, it was serious."

At 15 years old, Doug said he was a typical rebellious teenager and wanted to do what the other kids were doing. He wanted to “run the streets”, “sell dope,” and be looked at as a “tough kid.” Constructing an identity based on collective rather than individualistic cultural settings (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999), Doug eventually earned a felony conviction and was sent to prison for 10 years. Some of the thoughts that come to mind when he thinks of how he survived prison are words such as despair, survival mentality, scared, acceptance, and *religion*. Doug’s “I” to “Me” evolution came during his early educational years when he was labeled “hyperactive” and the teachers “did not know how to address it.” Also, key to Doug’s transformation was his identity change while incarcerated. Themes that emerged during his “after prison” clustering exercise consisted of him believing he only had this one last shot at life, *determined*, focused, stay positive, *change of thinking*, make it work, and struggle. Doug has been able to continue his education through vocational classes. He said that life after prison has been great and that he enjoys his freedom and believes that it is precious. He said he loves the feeling of being able to get up and go to work every day. Doug now sees himself as successful and is very proud when others see it too.

Phillip

Now 46 years old and looking back at his childhood years, Phillip said he grew up in poverty and was raised by his grandmother, but his mother lived nearby and he visited her often. He characterized his mother as big sister and he was her little brother. He found his father during adulthood and developed a *good relationship with him*. He also found he has a host of siblings with whom he has developed good relationships.

Positive school experiences helped shape Phillip's education. "Everybody coming up always had a thing about being an athlete. But being a little guy and they didn't have little athletes, so it ended up being art." Phillip liked art and math as a youngster. He said his teachers used him to demonstrate for the class. He was always called upon to go to the blackboard. He said he felt like he was teaching the class. "Everybody thought I was going to be an architect when I grew up," Phillip said. Specializing in captions, portraits, landscapes and blueprints, Phillip was told by two of his teachers that he could do anything he wanted, that he could be anybody he wanted to be and that he could excel in art. He graduated from high school and attended one semester of college before dropping out.

Phillip's "I" to "Me" evolution came after dropping out of college. Since he was considered too little to be an athlete, instead, he started a neighborhood gang, not to commit crimes, he said, but saw it as only *protecting and empowering their poverty-infested community*. Phillip became what his fragile community saw him as: a *soldier, a warrior, a protector of the neighborhood*. Consistent with Akers (2013) social learning theory, the basic assumption is that the same learning process in context of social structure, interaction, and situation, produces both conforming and deviant behavior.

Nevertheless, the protection of the community soon became criminal activity and that earned him felony convictions that sent him to prison for 22 years. He used the time in prison to study at the law library. He said mental toughness, *educational classes, faith and family visits* were all very helpful for him during his incarceration. Once he was released, Phillip said he needed to stay busy and be there for his family. Family is important to him and he attends church regularly. Also, he engages in motivational

speaking as a way of giving back to the community. Being able to feel productive and have a meaningful life is very important to Phillip now that he is no longer incarcerated. Topics for his motivational speeches consist of the dangers of peer pressure, making right decisions, thinking about consequences, and how to resolve conflicts with dignity and compassion. Phillip said the ability to help a young person in distress, danger or on the cusp of doing something bad is what motivates him to strive harder and do more in his community.

Rashad

Very similar to the other participants, Rashad was under reconstruction. Now in his late 50's and the owner of his own business, Rashad can remember his home life as filled with "people hustling, living in the projects, getting high, always having nice clothes and shoes and boxing." Rashad came from a two parent household with working class parents. His biological father did not raise him and he died when he was around 18 years old. Family members who encouraged him while growing up were his uncles, and the street hustlers. His first stepfather was a police officer and was verbally and physically abusive to his mother. Rashad remembers thinking as a teenager if he had been older, he would have killed him. He and his siblings were not abused by his stepfather and his mother managed to divorce him and marry a man whom Rashad said was good to his mother. Rashad said he and his *mother are best friends* to this day. Rashad remembers that as a teenager, his city was dubbed the murder capital of the United States. "I grew up at a time when only the strong survived."

He described his early schooling as being more influenced by people outside of his home than the people inside his home. "I always knew I was relatively intelligent and

even though I did good in school, I still gravitated toward the streets.” What he liked most about school was the structure, and his favorite subject was English. He liked being responsible and receiving instructions that was pertinent to everyday life. “I couldn’t make a connection with history at that time in terms of how it would benefit my life today, than what happened in 1776.” After graduating from high school, Rashad attended college but said he did not get anything out of it. He dropped out after 2 ½ years in college and started what he called “street hustling.”

Rashad’s “street hustling” resulted in him spending 22 years in prison for felony convictions. During the first part of his prison sentence, Rashad said he was a hard-head and got into trouble a lot. He realized that he was not the person that society deemed him to be and decided to make a change. Surviving prison, Rashad said he recognized his gift of being a natural leader, refusing to die in prison. He had thoughts of his family, furthering his *education, faith, brotherhood* and the overall struggle to live. Since he has been released, he visits the prisons as a motivational speaker. A devout Muslim, Rashad is very active in the Muslim community today and serves in the leadership position as the assistant Imam. Realizing that he loves public speaking, his oratory skills are one of his greatest assets. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggest in self-determination theory that the need for competence leads people to see and conquer challenges that are optimal for their capacities, and competence acquisition results from interacting with stimuli that are challenging.

His mother did tell him to go to school and get an education, but that always came without the explanation of why. Mead (1934/1967) said the self is something that has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience

and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process (p. 135).

Some of the choices that Rashad made were based on his social environment. He said he was attracted to the lure of the streets and deviant behavior as a youngster because that was what everybody around him was doing and they were admired. Since Rashad knew he was relatively intelligent, he figured he could do better in his deviance and this worked for a while. Those choices were soon taken away when he became incarcerated. During his incarceration, Rashad made the decision to make better choices after the ability to make mundane, every day choices was taken away from him. Rashad knew that his intelligence was above the limitations of incarceration and underwent a mindset change. Current thoughts of euphoria and enjoying the freedom to make choices are the same thoughts that Rashad said carried him through incarceration.

James

At the time of our interview, James was 68 years old working as a handy man at the community resource center. His duties consisted of odd jobs such as light janitorial, maintenance, handling basic security measures, and greeting clients at the door. He said *he likes taking care of people and things* and feels good when a job is done right. He said he really takes pride in his position at the community resource center.

Describing his home life while growing up, James said the emphasis was on the practical things in life like knowing how to clean house, wash clothes and do something to earn money. Raised in a single parent home with one sister, James did not know his father and said “he ain’t never had nothing to do with me.” James considers his *stepfather a good man* who raised him and never “whooped him.” His stepfather encouraged him to

go to school, but James did not like his early schooling and wished he could have been better understood. He took up upholstery and mostly focused on that instead of academics and was encouraged to do so. His favorite teacher was the upholstery teacher but he also played in the band and was on the wrestling team. Consistent with Deci & Ryan (1995), integrating identities and experiences results in people having a coherent, though ever-changing sense of self. Through the integrative process, people become more self-regulated or volitional, acting consistently with their needs and interests and experiencing higher well-being.

A crucible for James which contributed to his criminal lifestyle was his drive to take *care of the people in his family by being "the man."* This meant that he needed to do anything he could to get the basic needs met for his family and if that meant support through illegal activities, then so be it. Felony convictions sent him to prison on and off for most of his adult life. At the time of our interview, James has been out of prison for 10 years. He said that he survived prison by working and staying busy while incarcerated. His family support, thinking of what he was going to do and change about himself occupied his thoughts.

James' "I" is his response primarily to his own perception of his role within his family, toward whom he embraces the identity of caregiver and provider; his "Me" comes primarily from their attitudes toward him. As Mead (1934/1967), puts it, the attitudes of the others constitute the organized "Me," and then one reacts toward that as an "I." After being released from prison, James is focused on maintaining his mantra of staying busy. He is still taking care of family members and enjoys his grandchildren. He is highly involved in their lives and encourages them to stay in school. He enjoys his job at the

resource center as he believes he is taking care of the people there. He said in the last few years he has done more living than he did in the beginning of his life.

Kelvin

Kelvin volunteers in the community and takes his job duties of opening and locking up the church facility and *making sure everybody is safe very seriously*. Now 40 years old at the time of this interview, Kelvin said he has a lot to live for and takes pride in himself and his change in thinking. He said he greatly values the ability to be depended upon, to make sure security measures are in place and that protocol is followed while he is on duty.

Even though he considered his mother a strong black woman raising boys by herself, he said the lure of the street life was greater than she. He said the men he looked up to were in the streets and his mother was at home. She taught him to clean house and cook good meals. Consistent with the work of Becker, et al (in Ward & Marshall, 2011), all humans seek certain goods and construct their identities through the realization of these goods in certain types of activities and lifestyles. Kelvin moved to California and lived with his father for a while during some of his teenage years. He said it was a good experience, but once he moved back with his mother, his father was distant.

The distance away from his father resulted in Kelvin gravitating more to the men in the streets who he admired. To him, they were taking care of their families by providing for them any way that they could. It was in this concept that Kelvin described himself. "I'm a frontline man. Whatever needed to be done, I did it. I looked out for the good, take out the bad. I have a good heart. *Kids and pets love me.*" This is Kelvin's description of his mentality while growing up which earned him felony convictions. At

the age of 18 years old, he went to prison for 15 years. Kelvin said he survived prison with constant *thoughts of hope*.

He said the turning point in his life was *finding God* and knowing that he is now safe. Kelvin's identity evolution came when he professed his faith in Christianity. It was then that he stopped negatively identifying himself through the eyes of others, making his transformation iterative, to believing the good of what his faith says about him and thus he is still acting upon that positive belief and hope to this day.

Stanley

At 58 years old, Stanley works at the community resource center assisting the customers on how to use the computers. He said he used to be a customer of this same resource center and now loves the fact that he is now the computer instructor and *can help others learn* the same things. He said learning has always come easy to him and he just did not know what to with the knowledge after he had attained it. He said he traveled down a long, bumpy road to in order to figure it out.

Stanley is the only child his mother had. His father died when he was six years old. He attended church where his uncle was the pastor and Stanley played the drums for church services several times a week. Stanley said his mother was a church lady and he never heard her use profanity. Stanley recalled an incident in which their house was on fire and he was 12 years old and was still in the house. His mother ran back into the house, even though the firemen told her not to, but she did in order to rescue him. Stanley recalled *fond memories of family vacations, holidays and just being happy*.

Stanley attended private school until the seventh grade. "I have always been a bookworm type person. I love reading. Reading gives you the opportunity to learn things

that you never knew.” He said he did not appreciate what his mother was trying to do by enrolling him in private school. After getting kicked out in the seventh grade, Stanley went to public school and continued to learn. He said math was his favorite subject and his favorite teacher was the math teacher because he was an Army man and instilled *self-confidence*. “He used to tell us that we could do whatever we wanted if we try. He would treat you with respect.” During his high school years, Stanley said he was rebellious, experimented with drugs and alcohol, got kicked out of public school and obtained his GED at trade school at the age of 18. Knowles (1970) would identify Stanley as a life-long learner; adult education theory entails the ongoing education of themselves whether by education, personality, emotional stability or within their peer groups.

Stanley said being rebellious resulted in him serving three years in prison for a felony conviction. He stated that the way he survived prison was to not get comfortable with his surroundings. “I focused on life and tried to understand myself more and I had hope.” After prison, Stanley said he looks at things as not as half empty but as half full. He knew that life was going to be hard but if he could just focus on the positive and not the negative so much, it would help him in every area of his life. The first thing was to surround himself with like-minded people. Being around positive people helped Stanley tremendously. Also, the chance to give back to the community afforded Stanley the opportunity to feel pride and purpose in life. He said he felt needed, that it produced good feelings, and this all helped him see things as half full; which in turn gave him the feeling of movement and progress being made for his betterment and for the betterment of society. Prison was a bad experience for him and he said he had a mindset change that came after he was released. Stanley concentrates on trying to understand himself, to focus

on life on the outside, and to move forward. He said *church, work, and his family* are all factors that figure prominently in his life after incarceration.

Travis

Travis is a 26 year old, married father of two children. Travis is proud to say he has a *stable job, owns his own home, and provides for his family*. He said childhood memories of family life, being a typical kid and being happy are what come to mind when thinking of his early years. During his and teenage years, he said times were rough due to his mother's drug addiction. His mother would disappear for weeks at a time and his older siblings did what they wanted to do. "I would just sit around trying to figure out what to do." His relationship with his mother was loving but distant. When his mother married his stepdad, Travis said he taught him mechanical skills. His uncle was in the Navy and used to encourage him to stay in school.

He described his early schooling as academically rough. He said he realized that if he could just stay caught up with school work, then he would be okay but he said he learned this the hard way. Travis did not like the dress code and the "baby rules" of school. In his mind, the "baby rules" of school was in direct contradiction to his home life. Since his mother was not there a lot, Travis took care of his own needs. He worked to feed and clothe himself and paid some of the household bills. When he attended school, the rules were childish to him due to his assumption of his own manhood while still an adolescent.

His favorite teacher was there for him any time he needed to get away from people and to take time to think. "If it wasn't for him, I probably would not have made it through school. I could go to his classroom and chill out and get my mind right." Similar

to the findings of Faircloth & Hamm (2003), students value more highly those activities that take place in environments in which their affective needs are met. Travis was on the robotics team at his school and excelled at that in addition to wrestling and weight lifting. Despite his positive accomplishments, Travis earned a felony conviction.

He survived prison by focusing on getting out, *his family, and work*. A community resource program helped him tremendously by assisting him with employment and that was the turning point in his life. Consistent with Mead's (1934/1967) assertion that one has to find one's self in his own individual creation as appreciated by others; what the individual accomplishes must be something that is in itself social. So far as he is a self, he must be an organic part of the life of the community, and his contribution has to be something that is social (p. 324). Travis is now a graduate of the community resource program and gives back by mentoring the new students there. He said he loves to see the look on their faces when he tells them that he was once a student there. He describes it as a look of hope and admiration. Travis stays closely involved with the instructors. The instructors know his employer and check on him regularly while he is at work. Travis has been a model employee and a great example of success. He was asked to be the graduation speaker for the program one year and delivered a very moving and motivational speech that left some in tears. Survival after prison hinged on the ability to stay connected to caring and compassionate people and thinking of himself as a good person. This was and still is essential to Travis' identity reconstruction.

Steven

Steven is 32 years old at the time of our interview and recalling memories of growing up, he remembers having to be *responsible for the family at an early age*, that there was no male guidance for him, and since he was the big brother, he had to be the man of the house. He said he also remembers being determined to be successful, *attending church often, being stable and independent*. Steven said there are a lot of things that he is good at but he is yet to find his niche.

He described his home life while growing up as kind of sheltered; he was raised by a single mother, and that she took him to visit the zoo or to the movies. He was an only child for a long time before his sisters were born. He and his *mother are best friends now* and when asked about his father, Steven simply said “we’re enemies.” Male role models in Steven’s life were his uncles. He said they were all military men. One uncle in particular was the first black fire chief from his Midwestern city. Steven considers him the most successful male figure in his family. He used to encourage Steven to do better and to be a better man for his family.

During his schooling years, Steven said he liked science the most but disliked the teachers the most. However, he did mention one favorite teacher of whom Steven said “no matter if you were wrong or right, this teacher always seemed proud of you so everybody worked in his classroom.” Steven said he was very prideful but lowered his standards about himself and his education when he committed crimes to earn a felony conviction, Steven said he no longer indulge in criminal activities. “I try to maintain myself and really stay focused on my family and their well-being and their education. I mean, I enjoy the finer things in life, but I’ve learned that it takes patience and to sit

down and to slow down.” Akers’ (Jennings & Akers, 2011) differential reinforcement in social learning theory applies here as the imbalance of norms, values, and attitudes favorable toward violations of the law will increase an individual’s likelihood for participating in a particular criminal or deviant act. Steven became involved with the community resource center and said it was a liberating experience for him. He said it gave him a chance to get back on the *journey to accomplish things in life*.

He survived prison by staying focused, being self-dependent, learning to accept criticism, have high hopes, and being emotionally grounded. Once he was released from prison, Steven said he made a point not to having any friends from the past around, to maintain his focus, get moral support, be a positive influence to family and friends and be a leader by furthering his education. Steven was able to avoid negative friendships by relocating to a different area of town upon release. He said he loved his new anonymity and was able to flourish in the community. Staying focused was easier with the anonymity and the moral support from his family and his church was greatly needed. Steven said the church activities was “awesome” and gave him insight and awareness to who he really was and who he wanted to be. This mindset change helped him immensely in his quest to be a positive influence on his family and friends. Along with enrolling in vocational classes, Steven fulfilled his desire to further his education. Even though the perfect job has not come through for Steven yet, he is optimistic that it will soon and he takes pride in the simplicity of being just being optimistic.

Keith

At 29, Keith’s life is similar to the other participants. He describes himself as being self-employed, an entrepreneur, loves being his own boss, a self-starter, and enjoys

giving back to his community. He illustrates his childhood as enjoying school, being the *baby of the family and getting everything he wanted*. Growing up, his home life is described as peaceful and quiet with a great *relationship with his mother*. His father was not in the home and his relationship with him was “horrible.”

During his school years, Keith said his favorite teacher was the physical education teacher who was a real good guy who was open and willing to listen. Math was his favorite subject and he excelled at football. However, recalling memories of having *dark skin complexion was an issue at school for Keith*. He believed that he had to fight, be strong, fast and tough in order to get respect. To a young black man in America, respect may be associated with issues of manhood and self-worth (Gilder, in Leary, et al, 2005); having the mindset that he needed to be tough to get respect resulted in a felony conviction.

The turning point in his life was when he went to prison. Keith said he survived prison by staying to himself, not owing people, making good choices, reading, writing and not talking too much. “Everybody was so surprised to hear that I had went to prison.” Moreover, Keith said that it took him to go to prison for his friends to *change their lives*. “I am determined to make it by showing improvement, and by keeping the same mindset that got me through prison by staying focused.” He does this by making music. Keith is an aspiring rap artist. He has performed at local events as the opening act and has traveled to other states as the guest artist. He describes his rap music as rhythm and blues with descriptions of life in poverty, incarceration, family breakdown, friendships, relationships and education. He said he leaves a note of positivity in his music as that is what helped him survive his own incarceration.

Keith gives back to the community by encouraging other young aspiring artists at school and community events. He loves to talk about his mistakes and makes sure that he motivates his listeners and fans that hard work pays off and that even with setbacks, something good can come of your personal experience. Keith gives out free music CD's of his work and has let the positive "Me" take control of his life. Keith said his life is different now and his tough persona is now directed towards making music, reading and writing. As he puts it, "Music is my life."

Samuel

At 37 years old, Samuel is currently working as an employment coordinator for the community resource center. He loves that he can give back to people who may share a similar background. Growing up in a two parent household, Samuel said both his parents were functioning drug addicts, but described his childhood memories as having a *sense of achievement, being responsible, become successful and to serve as an example to others*. Samuel knows that going through a lot of challenging experiences went a long way in terms of shaping who he is as an individual. "My father always had an entrepreneurial spirit. He attended college but did not complete it. When I got older, he would pull me aside and give me advice."

Samuel said his parent's addiction had gotten worse and household utilities were disconnected so he worked part time to help feed the family. He was the *caregiver for his younger brother* and would bring food home from his job so his brother could have dinner. He said times were really hard and that it was a constant struggle to make ends meet but that his mother did the best she could while struggling with her addiction.

Samuel recalled schooling memories as his mother being a strict taskmaster when it came to homework. “The first stop after school was the kitchen table for homework. If there was no homework, there was still homework as my mother would want us to work a chapter ahead.” Samuel’s favorite subject in school was history but he felt that the classes were not moving fast enough, which led him to work a chapter ahead. He thinks this got him in trouble in the classroom because he would often get bored with the work.

Samuel said he turned to criminal activities to help provide for his younger brother. He was very proud of not having to worry about new shoes, or new clothes for his brother to wear to school. Consistent with Deci & Ryan (1985), with regard to the development of intrinsic motivation in self-determination theory, it explains how one’s undifferentiated interest and curiosity become channeled and elaborated as one’s innate capacities interact with the environment. Motivated to provide for his younger brother primarily due to his parents’ inability to do so, Samuel believed that he was helping out his parents by not having to wait on them to buy things. Samuel’s aunt and uncle were positive role models for him and encouraged him to succeed in education. He said they were the ones who “drove across town and were in the stands at my football games.” With the criminal activities came a felony conviction.

To survive prison, he said he had to think of the outside world as a figment of his imagination and to keep outside contact to a minimum. Samuel said he had to keep a cool head, stayed positive and gave others a positive word, and maintained his identity by living by the mantra “*I am not what I have done, but who I choose to be.*” Working as an employment coordinator for the resource center, Samuel has the opportunity to prove that he is not what he has done but what he has chosen to be. “I am able to help people secure

employment and get them on the road to self-sufficiency,” said Samuel. He talks to employers about hiring someone who has a felony. By explaining their case to a potential employer, Samuel believes that he helps the economic growth of the community, assist families with employment difficulties, and motivate the disenfranchised.

Giving back in this way proves on an everyday basis that he is not what he has done because Samuel has chosen the positive “Me” instead of the negative “I” that he saw in the eyes of educators, administrators, prison guards and even some family members. Being able to shed the negative “I” image and embrace the positive “Me” image was crucial for Samuel’s identity reconstruction process to come full circle.

Conclusion

Ten African American males participated in this study to unearth what causes success after incarceration. From their semi-structured interviews and clustering, themes of *resilience, family, faith, self-determination, and identity change* emerged. All of the participants underwent an identity reconstruction process brought about by what they described as their life experiences and changing what they saw in their mirror. By not taking on the role of a generalized other, they figured out how to change their thought process and to bring the “I” to “Me” evolutions full circle to stop at their new, positive construction of self.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusions

The primary purpose of this symbolic interactionist study is to explore the success of formerly incarcerated African American males. The research question asked, with recidivism and mass incarceration at an all-time high, the war on drugs disproportionately effecting whole communities of color, and the educational policies complicit in the school to prison pipeline, how did some African American men manage not to reoffend and be sent back to prison? A secondary purpose was to describe the nuanced ways three theories were used interchangeably as each participant was going through what I call an identity reconstruction process, which is similar to W.E.B Du Bois' (1903) notion of double consciousness. The participants were able to stop seeing themselves as others saw them (negative "I"), and started identifying with the true person (positive "Me"), who eventually emerged (Mead, 1934/1967). The intricacies of the three theories used in this study, social learning theory, self-determination theory and adult education theory, was captured at important intervals in the lives of the participants. A final goal was to provide educators, administrators and practitioners with an alternative to traditional disciplinary processes.

Chapter One explicates the concept of mass incarceration of the African American male is the result of the notion that retributive rather than restorative justice rhetoric prevailed during major social movements in the United States, e.g., the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement, and Jim Crow eras, while also reviewing, comparing, and contrasting the relevant literature relating to mass incarceration, restorative justice, and practices. Chapter Two explains the three theories

of social learning, self-determination and adult education as the theoretical framework used as a means to inform behaviors of formerly incarcerated African American males. Chapter Three employs symbolic interactionism and explains the appropriateness of this inquiry methodology to this study. I also reviewed the history of symbolic interaction, and discussed key concepts and contributors. Chapter Four reveals the participants' life experiences before incarceration, during incarceration, and after incarceration and discussed the thematic findings. In this final chapter, I reflect on my findings and point out the implications for practice, and future research.

What emerges from the findings is a close discussion of participant responses and their association to the conceptual and empirical literature surrounding the theories. The responses from the participants in this research should not be considered the ultimate end to this topic. Explanations may vary and differ from perspective to perspective, however, for the intentions of this study, the challenge is to shed some light on areas of inquiry that affect educational practice and policy (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10
Samuel 37 y/o Married 2 Children HS Diploma Some College 3 years in 9 years out Resource Center Employment Coordinator	Doug 38 y/o Divorced 2 Children GED Some College 10 years in 11 years out Oil Pipeline Worker	Phillip 42 y/o Married 6 Children HS Diploma Some College 22 years in 3 ½ years out Construction Worker	Rashad 56 y/o Married 4 Children HS Diploma Some College 22 years in 3 years out Self-employed	James 68 y/o Divorced 5 Children GED 12 years in 10 years out Building Maint.	Kelvin 40 y/o Married No Children GED 15 years in 7 Years out Janitorial/ Custodial	Stanley 51 y/o Single No Children GED 3 years in 30 years out Computer Instructor	Travis 26 y/o Married 2 Children HS Diploma 1 ½ years in 4 ½ years out Construction Worker	Steven 29 y/o Married 3 Children HS Diploma 3 ½ years in 3 ½ years out Unemployed	Keith 26 y/o Single No Children 2 ½ years in 3 years out Self-employed

Five themes surfaced interchangeably and in a variety of ways, each with its own significance associated with practice and theory (see Table 2). The implications for teaching, based on the participants' responses, offer exceptional insight for future research and study. The five themes discussed throughout this chapter, and interwoven throughout the lives of the participants, are resilience, identity change, family, faith, and autonomy. The themes are interwoven throughout the lives of the participants. They are experienced in an assortment of ways, in no particular order. The two most prominent themes, resilience and identity change hold unique significance in that these two embody agency within the participant that was not used or seen as needed but was discovered. It called for a depth of introspection wholly novel to the participants. Once acknowledged and accepted, they allowed a reconstruction of self to proceed.

Table 2

Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-Themes	Participant Views
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother • Father • Step-parent • Siblings • Children • Step-children • Other Adult/Mentor 	<p>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10</p> <p>P1, P2, P6</p> <p>P4</p> <p>P1, P4, P5, P10</p> <p>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5</p> <p>P3, P5</p> <p>P1, P3, P5, P7, P8, P9</p>
Faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christianity • Muslim 	<p>P1, P3, P6, P7, P9</p> <p>P2, P4</p>
Identity Change		P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Resilience		P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Independence		P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HS Diploma • College 	<p>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10</p> <p>P1, P2, P3, P4</p>
Employment		P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10
Purpose		P2, P3, P4, P6, P10
Pride		P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Provide for family		P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9
Goal Setting		P4, P10
Confidence		P1, P2, P3, P4, P10
Happy		P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10

As I explored how my 10 participants described their experiences, I found that they responded with similar attributes, e.g., *resilience*: the desire to symbolically stand firm again even after being bent or knocked down; *family*: the ability to stay connected to those who cared about their well-being; *faith*: their belief and dependence on a higher, spiritual power; *autonomy*: a profound self-motivation to be successful despite obstacles; and *identity change*: the reconstruction of self and the mindset change that took place (see Table 2). Their experiences were reminiscent of the framework concerning the three theories, social learning, self-determination and adult education. Two of these themes, *resilience* and *identity change* received a greater emphasis than the other three because all the participants made references that specifically fit into these categories. Sub-categories (see Table 2) were developed from all of the themes and reflect participant viewpoints as a result of their responses to interview questions and from the clustering exercise.

Theme One: Resilience

When asked what about the turning point in their lives, all the participants acknowledged the paramount need for survival and a better concept of self. This is reflected in the large number of responses under the categorical theme for resilience and identity change. These two themes were central, emerging from the literature and supporting Akers (1985/2013) social learning theory. In terms of survival/resilience, Rashad said that he grew up in the “projects” in the roughest part of town. “I grew up with the mentality that only the strong survived. I don’t have many friends who made it to the age of 25. That was just how it was.” Rashad became what his environment

demanding of him, which concurs with Akers' theory of social learning; the basic assumption being that the same learning process in a context of social structure, interaction, and situation, produces both conforming and deviant behavior.

Kelvin's resilience manifested itself through his personal definition of survival. "I had to be the toughest in my grade. I just had to. There was no other way. If not, I would have to fight to prove myself every day." In keeping with Jennings and Akers (2011), Kelvin met the definitions component of social learning theory in that the range of these values, orientations, and attitudes shapes an individual's definitions toward certain behavior as being more right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesirable, justified or unjustified, appropriate or inappropriate, excusable or inexcusable.

While each of the participants made references to resilience in a variety of ways, the notion that resilience is strengthened through relationships, specifically, mutually empathic, mutually empowering, growth-fostering relationships (Hartling, 2003); they all spoke of this notion in terms of survival, in the context of live free or die to self, both physically and metaphorically. The role of social learning theory is clear in this theme of resilience because they felt that greater was the need to live physically free and alter their sense of self, than to succumb to the perceived notion of being weak, constantly ridiculed and unpopular. Early in their lives, they learned ways to survive, grounded in similar destructive relationships, however, during identity transformation, resilience manifested the same way but in order to bring the positive "Me" to the forefront, in doing so, making their reconstruction complete resulting in continuous, lifelong success.

Theme Two: Identity Change

The principle of identity change is probably the predominately, theoretically-linked theme. Combined with the emphasis on resilience, this theme presents an interesting dualism that spills over into the empirically grounded perspectives on the concept of self. In extracting language and implications about identity change in my interviews, it was quite apparent that my participants have a view of self as described in Deci and Ryan (1995) notion of self-determination theory. The theory posits that integrating identities and experiences results in people having a coherent, though ever-changing sense of self. Through the integrative process, people become more self-regulated or volitional, acting consistently with their needs and interests and experiencing higher well-being.

The extent to which the participants held strong identity change experiences was eloquently illustrated by Samuel when he stated, “I am not what I have done, but who I choose to be.” Steven also indicated a reverence to identity change when he stated that he did not have respect for himself or his loved ones. “I got to know my whole character within me and I accepted it as good,” Steven said. The participants discussed how they came to know their true selves, determine that it was safe to be that person, and proudly put that person on display for society to see. These findings are consistent with self-determination theory in that integration is the process by which people acknowledge aspects of who they are and bring them into harmony with their values, emotions, identities, beliefs, and basic needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Ryan & Deci, 2008).

Reflecting on the idea of identity change and the types of action necessary to facilitate this process, Stanley surmised this when he said:

“I was a good, church going kid. My mother provided a stable home for me. She encouraged confidence, independence, and how to set goals. When I got to prison, I didn’t get comfortable with my surroundings. I decided to focus on understanding myself and looked for ways to improve myself and how to move forward in life. This had me thinking a whole lot about my future. I asked myself questions constantly. I would talk to other guys who were locked up longer and took some of their advice and some I didn’t. I just decided that I was important too.”

The construction and re-construction of the concept of self is a major theme throughout this study. This common experience for the participants centered on awareness of their personal behavior, their thought pattern, and a mindset change regarding self.

Additionally, re-learning how to interact with their environments, with other people, and society as a whole, the participants garnered valuable knowledge relative to independence and the ability to determine their own fate. Several of the participants identified a distinct moment at which they decided they mattered. From the self-determination theory literature, humans have an innate tendency for personal growth toward psychological interaction; and this tendency is facilitated by the social and environmental factors.

Theme Three: Family

Family was a recurring theme in the literature as it alluded to or illustrated a sense of connectedness among the key players within and around the participant’s home life, school life, incarceration, and work life. Strong, positive family ties was also attributed to the success after incarceration. Often, family is involved in the actual process of self-actualization (Maslow, 1943) which can lead to a sense of euphoria. The invariant constituents in this theme were “my mother is my best friend,” “My grandma made sure I had my school supplies,” I have so much respect for my mother, being a single parent to

us boys was hard,” “My uncle was my pastor and we looked up to him,” and “My uncle encouraged me to be a man and take care of my family.”

Many scholars suggest that this sense of family connectedness provide a support system that encourages them, regardless of the challenges in their lives, to persevere in hopes of changing their condition and achieving a higher level of opportunity for growth. As seen in Table 2, family support is a fundamental part of what it means to grow and progress in life. For people who come from environments that pose a detriment to being a successful individual, the family’s role become crucial in navigating the slippery slope of becoming a statistic for mass incarceration. Learning revolves around those family relationships, positive or negative, and have an impact on their outcomes.

Most of the participants shared views consistent with the literature such as Kilpatrick (1979) who contends there has been a shift in the perspective of social science researchers studying the black family. Kilpatrick states that an emphasis has gone from a deviant perspective to an emphasis on strengths of black families. Likewise, Arnold & Allen (1995), noted that Billingsley in his seminal book, *Black Families in White America* (1968), advanced the counter-hegemonic theoretical perspective that emphasized the strengths of black families instead of deficit models representations. The black family “... is an absorbing, adaptive, and amazingly resilient mechanism for the socialization of its children and the civilization of its society.”

The family theme resonated throughout the interviews. In the empirical literature, there is strong emphasis on the black family, not as pathological, but as adaptive. When asked to describe their home life, responses included universal family scenarios. Steven described his home life below:

“It was very nurturing, but I was sheltered. My mother was raising me and she would take me to ride horses or go swimming. We would go to the zoo or to the movies. My dad was not around but I knew that my mother loved me for him.”

This is a clear example of an adaptive family characteristic. For Travis, *family* is illuminated when he stated that: “even though my mom was bad on drugs, she still got me to my football games. I was on the wrestling team and I was the robotics captain for the robotics team.” According to Billingsley in an interview with Arnold & Allen (1995), Travis’ response highlights the importance of deemphasizing the family structure while highlighting the function of individual family members. Billingsley’s interview (1995), posited that families can sometimes function well even in structures that might not appear to be optimum – and can function poorly in optimum structures.

Theme Four: Faith

Several of the participants in this research study identified faith as a contributing factor for their success before, during and after incarceration. When asked about holidays in their homes and to elaborate on the turning points in their lives, the responses were consistent with self-determination theory’s notion that internalized regulation of activities or beliefs entails behaviors that reside within an individuals’ locus of causality and are perceived as self-determined or personally chosen, rather than imposed (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Faith was fully accepted and integrated in the participant’s value system. It was a choice to include such values within their identity reconstruction process. The participants were able to connect with others on a spiritual level and be motivated to continue their growth in other areas of their lives. The implication is engaging with others

on a spiritual level helps to enhance those relationships that they consider vital to their personal growth process.

Rashad, being Muslim, connected him with like-minded individuals who were intent on bettering their lives and the lives of others. “When I was in prison, I was looking for a faith community, one that I could identify with.” Consistent with self-determination theory, Rashad was presented with a choice and this motivated him to see himself growing and maturing. Phillip exercised his ability to choose by becoming a preacher and delivering his first sermon at the age of 21, before incarceration. “I was a minister for two years before I went to jail. I made the choice to minister and I made the choice to commit a crime.” Phillip considers giving back to the community by motivational speaking and distributing school supplies to children as another form of ministry. “My faith keeps me going in order to continue to give back,” Phillip said.

Giving back to the community as a connector to faith is what Kelvin exemplifies when he stated that he likes to keep people safe:

“The turning point in my life is when I found God. I believed that when I was out there doing bad things that I was keeping people in my neighborhood safe. When I went to prison, safety was the big thing. When I got out and started working at the CRC, I liked that fact that I was helping to keep people safe.”

Kelvin chose faith as the catalyst to justify all of his decisions. Now that he is out of prison, he prides himself on being able to take care of people and keep them safe.

Kelvin’s choices was intricately woven in his value system, and thus, justifiable for motivation and continued growth.

Theme Five: Autonomy

All of the participants in this study illuminated some aspect of autonomy.

According to Chirkov, Ryan, et al (2003), in self-determination theory formulation, a person is autonomous when his behavior is experienced as willingly enacted and when he fully endorses the action in which he is engaged and/or the values expressed by them.

The participants learned to appreciate themselves from a position of self-value rather than a position of internalizing negative assumptions of their self-worth. This enabled them to connect with family, to faith groups, to their community and society at large, and leverage those relationships based on a new solid foundation of self-worth.

Samuel's realization of self-worth is illustrated in the response below:

“After prison, I decided it was time to implement changes in my life. From that point, I made a serious effort and realized that in 32 years (the age when released from prison), I had never given 100% at anything. I was sitting in there (prison) thinking about that one day and then an analogy came to mind. If I had a Corvette – Corvettes are known for speed – if I had a Corvette, would I drive that Corvette the entire time I owned it 45-55 miles per hour without seeing what its full potential was? With that, I came to the conclusion that this is what I had been doing with my life. I made a decision to go and see exactly where I can go, how far I can go in my life starting at 32. Let's just see how far we can go with it. From that point on, that determination thing started to happen for me.”

Consistent with Deci & Ryan, (1985/2000) and Ryan, (1995) people are therefore most autonomous when they act in accordance with their authentic interests or integrated values and desires. Doug illustrated a time when he did not feel autonomous when he stated:

“I wanted to be a pilot when I grew up. I really did. I went to an air force program when I was in school called the civil patrol and I went there to get my flight school training to learn about airports, planes and so forth. I was a cadet master sergeant in that program, but peer pressure and influence kind of took me away from that. Nobody in my neighborhood was a pilot. I wanted to be like the tough kids.”

People often experience a lack of autonomy when pressured to do something they do not believe in or to follow social norms with which they do not identify (Chirkov, Ryan, et al, 2003). Seeing that autonomy can work for and against a person, the majority of my participants used the identity reconstruction process and successfully transitioned from incarceration to navigating in a free society. Being able to take charge and take ownership by asserting their agency in the most foundational ways of being human, they were able to identify their challenges; those of their own personal volition and those that were imputed on them; the negativity internalized; the falsehood discovered and uprooted; and their identity reconstructed to steer through future challenges.

Conclusion

This study does not take the issues of formerly incarcerated, African American males as a problem to be solved, but as a phenomenon; it is crucial that success after incarceration be further understood. Symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934/1967), posits that 1) the individual gains self-consciousness through the “Me”; 2) that one’s self conception derives from the responses others make toward one; and 3) that social control is in large part self-control exercised over the “I” by the “Me” (Bolton, 1981). Five plausible insights emerge through analysis of the semi-structured interviews and administering the clustering technique. The thematic categories of *resilience*, *autonomy*, *family*, *faith* and *identity change* are reviewed through the practical lens of restorative practices, followed by implications for practice and for further research.

Participants in this study describe the harsh realities they experienced as youngsters, adolescents, and adults. Mead (1934/1967) says individuals “act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them,” that the meanings that

things have derive from one's interactions with others, and that those meanings are encountered and modified in an interpretive process that involves the individual for whom those meanings exist (Blumer, 1969). This chapter, undoubtedly, highlights the main purpose of this study which ultimately is to convey the participants' growth from incarceration to successful adults despite the obstacles faced for someone with a criminal background report. The collective growth serves an educative purpose because it assists in informing and increasing awareness to the unforgiving laws after a person has paid his debt to society. In addition, the analysis of the thematic categories also include a relevant literature review to add depth, substance, and clarity, which is vital to facilitating the discussions of the implications for the study.

Implications for Practice

In this study, social learning theory, self-determination theory and adult education theory provided ways to understand the participant's identity re-construction, which was unbeknownst to them while they were undergoing it. The aforementioned three theories spans many years of practical inquiry, scholarly thought, and empirical research. Such widespread focus on these theories guide examinations about why it is significant and what are its improvements to education and society. The findings suggest that all of the participants acknowledged a mind-set change in which they accepted a positive version of themselves and deemed that to be their authentic self, finally shedding what symbolic interaction describes as humans construct themselves through continuous communication with others (Mead, 1934/1967). In the participant's experience, it was the continuous communication with society that deemed them unworthy and negative. This self-concept

was then internalized and lay dormant until the mind-set change began to take place in their lives.

Particularly relevant for positive community and identity development is the notion of restorative practices. The research question of what did a formerly incarcerated African American male see in the eyes of teachers, administrators, and people in positions of authority? What did they see in the eyes of society? In the eyes of the prison guards? According to Mead (1934/1967), a person brings his “I,” a symbolized object of consciousness, into every interaction. He reacts to another’s perception of him (“Me”) and changes accordingly. The result was incarceration for all of my participants. When one considers the implicit involvement of harsh educational discipline via disproportionately higher expulsion/suspension/detention rates of minority students; and the explosion of mass incarceration of African American males; it becomes apparent that a special effort must be made to empower policy makers, educational reformers, administrators and teachers to be a part of the solution to this epidemic. The relevance of using restorative practices as an alternative to harsh school discipline could have impacted and negated their incarceration experience my participants undertook.

Restorative practices are based on the philosophy that an imbalance results after a wrongdoing has been committed. The currency needed to restore balance between the victim and the offender involves the following components: A) an acknowledgement of the victims’ harm and needs, B) the offenders’ obligation to be accountable and responsible for his or her actions, and C) the community’s commitment to assume responsibility for the victim and the community (Zehr, 2002). As a symbol of community, circles are one of the most distinctive and flexible forms of restorative

practices (Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009). According to the authors, just sitting in a circle creates the feeling that a group of people is connected, and when the teacher sits among the students, it enhances the quality of their relationships. Additionally, restorative practices may promote social capital by creating an environment where individuals are encouraged to assume responsibility for their behavior (Morrison, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Imagine what might have been the outcome had my participants been involved in restorative practices in school. Would their educational outcome have looked different? According to Zehr (2002), whereas retributive justice is based on the belief that the imposition of punishment vindicates wrongdoing, restorative practices focuses on “relational practices which brings individuals together following a wrongdoing.

While circles can be used as a response to wrongdoing, they are very effective as a proactive process for building social capital and creating classroom norms. Teachers can use circles to check in with students at the beginning of the day or before certain classes to help students with planning, to set ground rules for projects and activities, and to deal with more serious problems in a class (Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009). For Travis, having a safe space at school to talk about his feelings was pivotal for him.

“It was rough at school. I knew if I could just stay caught up with school work, then I would be okay. I did not like the “baby rules” of school though. If it wasn’t for my favorite teacher letting me come to his class and chill out to think, I probably wouldn’t have made it as far as I did.”

The most common way to do a circle meeting is to arrange students’ chairs in a circle, ask a question and have the students respond in turn going around the circle. This “go-around” technique is the simplest and easiest way to manage. It helps to use a “talking piece,” a symbolic object that can be passed around from student to student, designating the only person who has the right to speak. It is important that no one interrupt the

speaker. This circle go-round creates remarkable decorum (Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009).

For Doug, a teacher that checked in with him periodically impacted his passion to continue his education:

“I loved school but I was hyperactive. I learned fast and figured out letters, shapes, and sounds real quick. I got bored and would get into trouble and the teachers didn’t know what to do with me. I got suspended a lot and got into more trouble. My favorite subjects was social studies, math and music. I played in the band when I was in school. The band director would check on me in other classes, asked me how things was going.”

According to Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel (2009), a technique called check-ins are part of the circle go-round process. At the beginning of class, a teacher may do a go-around in which each student responds to a question or statement like:

- How are you feeling today?
- What is one of your academic goals for today?
- Make a commitment about your behavior in school today.
- Review something you accomplished last week.

Similar to check in, teachers may want to do a check-out go-around at the end of the day (Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009). Each student can respond to a question or statement like:

- How was your day today?
- Say one thing you liked about this class today.
- What is one thing you learned today?
- What are you looking forward to for school tomorrow?

Teachers need circles to be a tool for building relationships and solving problems. Many of the simple go-round exercises and check-ins or check-outs can be done in a few minutes. Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel (2009) suggest tips to make the circles go smoothly:

- Set clear topics and goals for the outcome of the circle
- Set a positive tone. If you are confident and upbeat, the students will follow your lead.
- Keep the focus. In a kind and supportive way, make sure the conversation sticks to the goal you have set.
- Make students your allies. For example, you can tell several students before an upcoming circle, “I’m counting on you to speak up today,” and ask them to speak first.
- Always sit in the circle with the students and participant fully.

The participants in this study all mentioned a teacher who they could count on to listen to them discuss their feelings regarding school, home life, employment, family situations, etc. This proved to be very helpful but it was not enough to deter from a path to incarceration. Might a structured, ongoing circle go-around at school helped with their decision making process? When asked the question of what did they like most about school, the general consensus was a caring teacher who they felt comfortable enough with to share their feelings with. Consistent with Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel (2009), when people feel connected to one another through mutual understanding and empathy, they are less likely to misbehave or treat each other disrespectfully.

Incorporating restorative practices in school is not impossible. It requires a paradigm shift in thinking, understanding, and being. For example, according to the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), research in restorative practices has already shown remarkable results in improving the well-being of crime victims, reducing offending among delinquent and at-risk youth, diminishing violence and misbehavior in schools, and empowering families to solve their own problems (Beyond Zero Tolerance, 2008).

Such a change in thinking and understanding behavior presents a challenge to measuring successful outcomes of students, (e.g. graduate high school, non-incarceration, higher education), however, it is not impossible for school administrators to assist teachers with student concern for others and empathy and make progress in this realm. A closer look at restorative practices in schools is already being conducted in New Zealand, Philadelphia and Canada, with reports of success gaining national and international attention (“Restorative Success,” 2012). The application of restorative practices in schools is an urgent matter, as the numbers continue to rise for suspensions, expulsions and detention for minority students, which in turn contributes to the exodus to incarceration.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted to bring the voices of successful, formerly incarcerated African American men to the forefront in an effort to describe and enrich the meaning of their lives throughout their K-12 experience, during incarceration, and then to adult education. The purpose of capturing, interpreting and describing their experiences was to create cultural and educational knowledge not found in educational textbooks – that is

knowledge from the participants as they looked back at their younger selves, the invisible student, the criminal, to the lifelong learner. The cultural knowledge produce, then provides insight to the collective growth the participants undertook which also illuminates implications for practice along with suggestions for further research.

While this study focused on how formerly incarcerated African American men managed not to reoffend and become re-incarcerated, it is important that future research considers teacher perspectives of how African American men have to climb insurmountable odds to make it to school every day. That is, researchers should observe the daily, small non-academic successes that are accomplished by minority students and in what ways. What would solidify this type of research further would be an investigation of particular teacher acuity of how they are show compassion for their students and what their students perceive from them as compassion.

Additionally, it would be helpful to observe classrooms within an incarcerated population and compare and contrast it with classrooms in public, private, or charter schools settings in which teacher and student relationships can be observed, looking for types of behaviors that reflect compassion and understanding attributes, and whether or not these attributes are perceived the same by both teachers and students. The participants acknowledged that it was a teacher who sporadically showed compassion and understanding during their school experience and that fragile seed of compassion and understanding is what bloomed later on in life to offset the negative “Me” that took over their identity. While they were undergoing their identity reconstruction, they somehow garnered the courage to remember that a teacher somewhere in their school experience showed them hope.

Teacher education reformers leave little curricula room in their demands for rigor for collaboration and searching foundational inquiry among teacher educators and their students (Adams, 1994; Laird, 1988/1998). It is imperative that educational reformers consider the implication of harsh school discipline and its perceived biases concerning minority children. The rise in mass incarceration can be combatted with educational reform. Restorative practices permit all those involved in schooling to share their narratives and to build relationships, empowerment, safety measures, and hope within all children.

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APPENDIX A

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Human Research Curriculum Completion Report

Printed on 4/5/2011

Learner: Joy Thomas (username: thom0811)

Institution: University of Oklahoma

Contact 2140 Running Branch Road

Information Edmond, Oklahoma 73013 USA

Department: Education

Phone: 405-713-6523

Email: joythomas4@sbcglobal.net

Social Behavioral Modules:

Stage 3. Refresher Course 3 Passed on 03/02/11 (Ref # 5194454)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
SBR 201 Introduction	03/01/11	no quiz
Undue Influence	03/02/11	1/1 (100%)
Research Activities Eligible for Exemption	03/02/11	1/1 (100%)
Privacy vs Confidentiality in Social & Behavioral Research	03/02/11	1/1 (100%)

Assessing Risk in Social & Behavioral Research	03/02/11	0/1 (0%)
Social and Behavioral Research With Prisoners	03/02/11	1/1 (100%)
Completing the SBR 201 Refresher Course	03/02/11	no quiz
Defining Research with Human Subjects	03/02/11	1/1 (100%)

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.

Professor, University of Miami

Director Office of Research Education

CITI Course Coordinator

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Announcement

***RECRUITMENT
ANNOUNCEMENT***

**LOOKING FOR MALES TO
PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH
STUDY!!**

**CAUSES OF SUCCESS AFTER DOING
PRISON TIME**

Research project focusing on success factors of male ex prisoners who have been out of prison for three years and have not re-offended.

Results will be used to assist educators with better teaching techniques.

If you are interested in participating, please call or email the contact person below. Thank you!

Joy Thomas
405-464-8878
joy.m.thomas-1@ou.edu

*The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution
IRB Number: 13501*

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about you.

What was your early schooling like?

What did you like most about school?

What did you like least about school?

Tell me about your favorite teacher.

Did you work while you were in school?

What was your favorite subject?

What kind of school activities were you involved in?

What was your home life like?

Who were you raised by?

Describe your home life while in school.

What was your relationship like with your mother?

What was your relationship like with your father?

What was your relationship like with your siblings?

Describe holidays in your home

Where did your family shop for groceries

Any family members or role models who encouraged you?

Could you tell me about what you do here at the CRC?

What has been your experience with this program at CRC?

What has been a turning point in your life?

Tell me about your neighborhood that you live in right now.

How is it the same or different from the neighborhood you grew up in?

What was the first meal you had once you were released from prison?

What was life like after release?

What did you want to be when you grew up?

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

University of Oklahoma

Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Dissertation study on ex prisoner success

Principal Investigator: Joy Thomas

Department: College of Education EDS

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted at public places. You were selected as a possible participant because you responded to a recruitment ad posted at the community resource center and have been out of prison for at least three years.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study is:

To study factors that lead to success after leaving prison to see if theories of self determination, social learning and adult education are valid.

Number of Participants

Approximately 10-15 people will take part in this study.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

Participate in an meeting with follow up conversation/discussion for clarifications. Information will be obtained from the clustering method. You will be writing in response to a nucleus word on a page and asked what comes to mind and circle it. Other ideas will radiate from the nucleus word. It is a nonlinear brainstorming process similar to free word association. This activity will be not be taped. After the clustering is completed, the conversation/discussion for clarification purposes with the participant will be taped.

Length of Participation

The meeting is expected to last 30-90 minutes.

This study has the following risks:

Some people may feel that we are asking personal questions about themselves and their families regarding violence and criminal exposure/activities. That is not the intent of this research and we do not wish to find out anything about previous or current activities. As researchers we are legally obligated to report criminal or abusive behavior. You do not have to respond to any question(s) that you would rather not answer.

Benefits of being in the study are

None

Confidentiality

In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you without your permission. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include the OU Institutional Review Board.

Compensation

You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this study. Thank you for your time.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Audio Recording of Study Activities

To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

I consent to audio recording. Yes No.

Contacts and Questions

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at

Joy Thomas

405-464-8878

joy.m.thomas-1@ou.edu

Courtney Vaughn, Ph.D – Advisor

405-325-4202

vaughn1@ou.edu

Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions or if you have experienced a research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL



The University of Oklahoma®

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION - IRB

IRB Number: 13501
Approval Date: August 24, 2011

August 25, 2011

Joy Thomas
Education
820 Van Fleet Oval, ECH 227
Norman, OK 73019

RE: Causes Of Success After Doing Prison Time

Dear Ms. Thomas:

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and granted expedited approval of the above-referenced research study. This study meets the criteria for expedited approval category 6&7. It is my judgment as Chairperson of the IRB that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected; that the proposed research, including the process of obtaining informed consent, will be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46 as amended; and that the research involves no more than minimal risk to participants.

This letter documents approval to conduct the research as described:

Consent form - Subject Dated: August 24, 2011
Survey Instrument Dated: August 16, 2011 Clustering instructions
Recruitment flyer Dated: August 16, 2011
Protocol Dated: August 16, 2011
IRB Application Dated: August 16, 2011
Survey Instrument Dated: June 22, 2011 Interview questions
Survey Instrument Dated: June 22, 2011 Slides
Letter Dated: June 22, 2011 Letter of support- TEEM

As principal investigator of this protocol, it is your responsibility to make sure that this study is conducted as approved. Any modifications to the protocol or consent form, initiated by you or by the sponsor, will require prior approval, which you may request by completing a protocol modification form. All study records, including copies of signed consent forms, must be retained for three (3) years after termination of the study.

The approval granted expires on August 23, 2012. Should you wish to maintain this protocol in an active status beyond that date, you will need to provide the IRB with an IRB Application for Continuing Review (Progress Report) summarizing study results to date. The IRB will request an IRB Application for Continuing Review from you approximately two months before the anniversary date of your current approval.

If you have questions about these procedures, or need any additional assistance from the IRB, please call the IRB office at (405) 325-8110 or send an email to irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aimee Franklin".

Aimee Franklin, Ph. D
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board

